USAID/OTI Afghanistan Program

Final Evaluation

Prepared for the Office of Transition Initiatives
Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance
United States Agency for International Development

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Acronyms and Glossary of Terms

Acronyms

ACSF		Afghan Civil Society Forum
AEIP		Afghanistan Emergency Information Program
AIA		Afghanistan Interim Authority
AIHRC		Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission
AINA		"Mirror" – Not an acronym
ATI		Afghan Transition Initiative
AWEC		Afghan Women's Education Center
CHLC		Civilian Humanitarian Liaison Center
CIDA		Canadian International Development Agency
CIGI		Community Improvement Governance Initiative
CDC		Community Development Council
CDIE		Center for Development Information and Evaluation (USAID)
CLJ		Congressional Loya Jirga
DA		Development Assistance (funds)
DG		Democracy and Governance
DJ		Disk jockey
DoWA		Department of Women's Affairs
DHSA		Development and Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan
EAC		Education and Aid Center
ELJ		Emergency Loya Jirga
ESF		Economic Support Funds
EU		European Union
FSN		Foreign Service National (staff)
FY		Fiscal year (U.S. Government)
IDA		International Disaster Assistance (funds)
IED		Improvised Explosive Device
IG		Income Generation
IO		International Organization
IOM		International Organization for Migration
IP		Implementing Partner
IWPR		Institute for War and Peace Reporting
Loya Jirga		"Grand Council" unique to Afghanistan; traditionally elders come together to settle affairs of the nation or rally behind a cause.
M&E		Monitoring and evaluation
MoAL		Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MoC		Ministry of Communications
MoE		Ministry of Education
MoF		Ministry of Finance
MoI		Ministry of Irrigation
MoIC		Ministry of Information and Culture
MoWA		Ministry of Women's Affairs

NGO		Non-Governmental Organization
NSP		National Solidarity Program
OTI		Office of Transition Initiatives
PMP		Performance Monitoring Plan
PRC		Provincial Women's Center
PRT		Provincial Reconstruction Team
SDF		Sanayee Development Foundation
Shura		"Consultative assembly"
TBM		Team Building Meeting
TI		Transition Initiative (funds)
TISA		Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan
UNDP		United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM		United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID		United States Agency for International Development
USAWC		U.S. – Afghan Women's Council
VOA		Voice of America
WRC		Women's Resource Center (=PRC)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of the final evaluation was to provide the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and the U.S. Agency for International Development with an assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, and lessons learned from OTI's mega-program in Afghanistan. Since evaluations of the media program had been undertaken and a study of management issues was planned, this evaluation addressed the following fundamental questions.

1. Was OTI strategic?

This question was designed to find out if OTI did its political analysis well and then acted accordingly. Was OTI's program targeted at the key transition needs, did it adjust when the situation called for new and different activities, did it take advantage of critical openings, and did it match its resources and activities to its strategy?

2. Did OTI promote government legitimacy?

This question addresses the objective of building confidence and awareness that a responsive national government exists to provide real services to its citizens. Another part of this question seeks to determine if OTI contributed to connecting people to their government at the local and national levels. A definition of "connection" was required to answer this question.

3. Did OTI's use of participatory democratic processes increase citizen's connections to each other and to local authorities?

This question was designed to find out if participatory processes (such as building consensus on priority needs) were in fact used in OTI project communities, and, if not, why? If they were used, did they contribute to increased and continued discussion among citizens?

METHODOLOGY

The final evaluation was undertaken by a team of three evaluation specialists supported by a logistician and an interpreter. One of the evaluators focused on gender[1] issues as they cross-cut the three research questions. A separate gender evaluation report has also been produced.[2]

The evaluation methodology combined archival examination and in-depth interviews of key participants with field visits to project activity sites. Semi-structured interviews were carried out in Washington and Afghanistan with a range of participants and observers of the OTI program. The team also traveled to field activity sites in three regions of Afghanistan (northern, central, and southern), where interviews were carried out with implementing partner field staff and project beneficiaries. Some 95 of 714 sub-grants (13%) were examined, usually involving a field

[1] Although not strictly speaking correct, in this report the term "gender" will be used to refer only to women.
[2] Carlin, Anne. July 2005 (Draft). "OTI Afghanistan Program Evaluation: Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives and Impacts. October 2001 – June 2005."

inspection visit. The team spent about three weeks in Washington and three in Afghanistan between April 26 and June 5, 2005.

CONCLUSIONS

Was OTI strategic?

OTI was strategic in its approach to its first mega-program ever. Its strategy focused from the beginning on support to the Bonn Agreement transition process, and also united around three basic orientations: supporting and legitimizing the new Afghan central government; promoting participatory democratic processes in communities; and developing the objectivity and outreach of the Afghan media. OTI strategic emphasis on top-down government support and bottom-up community democratization usually merged in an explicit strategy to connect community leaders with government representatives in a process of community infrastructure rehabilitation.

While strategically relevant, these three orientations were not all equally successful in application. Moreover, measurable objectives were never developed, nor were there significant shifts in strategic orientation once the initial crisis period had passed by June 2002. With the exception of the media program, implementation methodologies developed in the first months generally carried down to the end of the overall program. The media program, evaluated separately by the USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE), was the most successful of the three objectives; promotion of participatory democratic processes in communities least successful. The following are the most important conclusions relating to strategic content and relevance of the Afghanistan program.

- OTI focus remained fixed on the key transition points of the Bonn Agreement, bringing appropriate resources and personnel to bear on these events. OTI's major role in ensuring the success of the Emergency Loya Jirga is indisputable.

- Beyond the Bonn process, OTI programming generally stayed true to its three broad strategic objectives of legitimizing the government and connecting it to communities, supporting grassroots democracy, and creating an Afghan capacity to produce objective and quality public information.

- Within its broad strategic orientations, OTI's actions were tactical. Except in the media program, there was no strategic phasing or sequencing of implementation activities. Although the International Organization for Migration (IOM) purports to show a strategic progression in its work with government and communities, there is no indication that OTI was aware of these programmatic phases.

- Tactically, OTI showed a good deal of flexibility and responsiveness in the sub-grants it approved. In this sense, the program shifted rapidly and took advantage of critical openings. Nevertheless, nearly half of all sub-grants (46%) and one-third of total funding were quick-impact, community-level infrastructure projects. In spite of early rhetoric to the contrary, this program approach did not shift gears to higher levels as the program progressed over 3½ years.

- Shifting strategic orientations normally relies on effective program monitoring, but despite attempts to develop Performance Monitoring Plans, progress toward OTI objectives was never measured. Monitoring of sub-grants by OTI was discontinuous and remained focused on contractual compliance and quality.

- In spite of significant support for Afghan women at the highest levels of the U.S. administration, no coherent strategy to support Afghan females was developed by OTI. OTI programming related to women consisted of mostly small, seemingly haphazard projects.

- While not strategically incorporated into or alongside OTI objectives, attention to gender issues nevertheless constituted a theme underlying nearly one-fifth of OTI programming. This was particularly evident in the early days of the OTI program, when a gender assessment was carried out and a long-term gender advisor hired. During its tenure in Afghanistan, OTI funded meaningful and important projects that benefited women. Overall, some 24% of OTI grants and 17% of funding were devoted to activities with at least one component targeting women.

Did OTI promote government legitimacy?

OTI played a significant role in promoting central governmental legitimacy, although this was also a central objective of other donor countries and their agencies. OTI's early entry into Afghanistan, rapid logistical support to ministries, and continued push to connect the new government to rural communities through quick-impact projects has undoubtedly raised governmental visibility, influence, and ultimately legitimacy to heights not seen for a quarter century. The population is well aware that a process of governmental legitimization and State building has been underway since late 2001 and that government has the mandate, if not the current means, to provide development and other services to far-flung communities.

The degree to which quick-impact projects have established a meaningful two-way relationship, or connection, between community members and local and central governmental representatives is more problematic. While OTI activities clearly contributed to linking government and communities, communities are quite aware that funding and implementation activities are provided by donor agencies and that government largely remains marginal to this process. The degree of connection between communities and their new government still remains tenuous. The following are the most important conclusions regarding the promotion of governmental legitimacy.

- Some 78% of OTI sub-grants and 66% of funds were dedicated to the objective of increasing the Afghan government's capacity and responsiveness to its citizens. Legitimacy depended on making government accountable to citizens' needs and effective in response.

- OTI's first focus on entering Afghanistan was to prepare ministries to function. Some 17% of funding to increase the Afghan government's capacity and responsiveness (11% of total funding) was spent on rehabilitating central ministries. Increasing ministerial functionality was a critical, significant, relevant and effective objective for the expenditure of OTI funds.

- Through community-level projects, OTI sought to connect central and provincial governments with each other and with their constituent communities. OTI activities predominantly focused on redirecting the community to their local authorities instead of implementing partners to express their needs. However, bottom-up initiatives have generally not been matched by governmental involvement, and no solid connections have been made between provincial departments and central governmental ministries.

- Funding for election processes and awareness, including the selection of delegates to the two Loya Jirgas, totaled about 7% of the total OTI budget. Election activities, if sometimes poorly planned, were well implemented and fully engaged local authorities and communities. Although only a small portion of OTI activities, election support activities proved to be highly important in terms of impact.

- During training sessions for women in constitutional and election processes, implementers learned that it was possible to reach women in remote areas and for these women to understand the basic constitutional and rights issues under discussion. Moreover, the urban, educated women conducting the training learned much about rural Afghanistan and rural women, beginning a process of linking urban and rural women.

- The two ministries most involved in projects in which girls and women were beneficiaries of OTI grants were the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). MoE involvement and effectiveness in school construction or rehabilitation (Ministry met with the community and the school board to discuss construction issues and provide updates and information) usually led to increased visibility and credibility for the MoE, in spite of delays, quality problems, and selection issues.

- With the Ministry of Women's Affairs, government engagement with OTI-funded projects usually revolved around income-generation training for women and the construction of Provincial Women's Centers (PWCs). Neither has reached its potential of raising governmental legitimacy in the eyes of rural women. Income-generation training has suffered from lack of community participation in design, and failure to consider marketing issues in implementation. On the other hand, a relationship between Provincial Women's Centers, their MoWA staff, and the wider female population has yet to occur.

Did OTI's use of participatory democratic processes increase citizen's connections to each other and to local authorities?

Activities that sought to raise the level and importance of participatory democratic processes in communities have been least successful among OTI objectives. The OTI-supported process of linking government to communities also involved linking communities to local government, but this did not alter community political or social organization. In other words, there is no evidence that relationships between citizens or between citizens and local authorities have been significantly affected by attempts to promote participatory democratic processes in local project selection, implementation, and monitoring. Afghan communities have a long tradition of local control by landowners and strongmen that are not easily affected by governmental service

provision. This is especially true if projects remain focused on quick-impact infrastructure, in which traditional elites can easily speak for the community as a whole. The following are the most important conclusions in respect to the promotion of participatory processes in rural communities.

- While activities undertaken at the community level were important in their own right, their main purpose was to promote a process of community democratic change. However, OTI's community participation model and participatory processes were never clearly articulated, identified, or documented. Activities were undertaken under the assumption that bringing communities and service providers together would result in more consensual, more open, more inclusive decision making. This generally did not occur.

- OTI's focus on community infrastructure – 87% of community impact activities – was maintained for much too long. While important for the first six to 12 months, reliance on quick-impact infrastructure projects continued down to program close-out, removing resources from activities more likely to produce qualitative changes in community political and social organization, such as micro-credit and micro-enterprise, peace building and conflict resolution, civic education, and other innovative interventions.

- Income-generation projects for women were only 3% of overall funding and generally failed to address marketing issues. Although these and other community-level projects were often used to expose "captive audiences" to health, literacy, and civic education messages, the success or failure of these "hidden-agenda" components has not been monitored or documented.

- OTI's peace building and conflict resolution activities proved highly successful in terms of participatory processes, consensus building, confidence building, improved mediation, and changing attitudes. Peace building workshops were conducted by a local Afghan NGO, resulting in the formation of peace committees. These, in turn, led to changed attitudes and behaviors, whereby prejudices against specific groups were reduced.

- Many community-level infrastructure projects have suffered from poor quality, because OTI lacked the means to effectively monitor hundreds of such projects across Afghanistan. Poor quality structures in the face of a government unable to rebuild or repair, will over time damage the very gains in acceptance and confidence of government that these projects were intended to achieve.

- Rehabilitation of girls' and coeducational schools was important, because it reopened public space for Afghan females. This visibility reconnected women and girls physically and psychologically with the wider community, since the community agreed it was acceptable for women and girls to return to the public sphere.

- These rehabilitation projects per se did not necessarily increase women's connectedness to each other. Income generation and civic education projects, by contrast, connected women in new ways and prompted social change in some villages. Income-generation projects targeting women provided social and psychological benefits to community women, giving them a

legitimate reason to leave the house and make female acquaintances they might not have met otherwise. Civic education courses had a similar impact and brought women together to discuss their political and human rights.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OTI Strategic Orientations and Relevance

- OTI can and should be strategic in its country programs. Being strategic means taking responsibility for a few longer-range objectives from the beginning of country operations. These objectives should be developed on the basis of initial, rapid assessments and should be reviewed and modified as the country situation evolves. This was clearly the early intention in the Afghanistan program. Activities focused on longer-term objectives can exist alongside short-term actions predicated on new U.S. foreign policy emphases or needs.

- The best way to keep activities focused on strategic objectives is to conduct a strategic planning session once the post-crisis situation has stabilized. The objective of this session should be to reach an agreement amongst OTI and implementation partner managers on a Performance Monitoring Plan that can be followed over the anticipated remaining program (2-3 years). This PMP should be kept as simple and practical as possible with indicators that are realistically measurable. In the context of OTI programming, this means that indicators will probably track major outputs rather than true impacts.

- While infrastructure activities make sense in the early stage of a program intervention, this should be phased into activities of a qualitative nature that evolve as confidence is generated in the population. The ability to phase and sequence new types of interventions will depend a good deal on the size of the country, state of community infrastructure, and the ability to rapidly implement quality projects.

- OTI should set its own strategic priorities and promote them to implementing organizations, rather than letting the latter set their own course. To maintain control in a mega-program, the number of OTI field staff must be augmented substantially, particularly when the initial situation has given way to one where knowledge has accumulated and stock can be taken. Some part of that staff should be charged with monitoring program performance against objectives. The external constraints limiting OTI staffing in mega-programs will have to be eased, if OTI is to reach its full potential.

- OTI can and should develop a gender strategy within OTI country programming. In Afghanistan, project implementation that could benefit women and girls lacked an overarching national strategy. Attention to gender issues would have been most relevant for the participatory processes promoted in communities. It is also preferable to mainstream gender issues into broader objectives, rather than create stand-alone, gender-based activities.

OTI Role in Promoting Government Legitimacy

- Provision of funding for infrastructure and logistics-support projects to increase the functionality of central government ministries should be maintained as a key objective for future OTI projects. This proved quite successful in "standing up" the Afghan government for a minimal cost ($5.2 million of the total $46.6 million). Moving quickly to enable effective and efficient communications between regional governments and the central government should also remain a high priority, and should be implemented at the earliest possible time.

- Ministries in Afghanistan have lacked cooperation amongst themselves, connection to their provincial and district delegations, and coordination with community-level governance structures. The process of building these linkages should be watched over more carefully by OTI, rather than leaving it to implementation partners. When security or distance is an issue, the practice of contracting local NGOs, such as Afghans for Afghans, to monitor project achievements in far-flung regions should be emulated.

- Monitoring of implementing partners and their contractors will be all the more necessary when projects move past the infrastructure stage. Qualified local NGOs will normally prove to be more successful than international organizations and OTI staff at regularly monitoring community-level projects, where governmental legitimacy, community confidence, and democratization are prime objectives. Trust by members of remote communities has to be developed gradually, and each community requires an adjustment of community participation strategies.

- OTI projects often require the cooperation and coordination of several ministries and departments to avoid duplication of efforts, optimize the use of resources, provide swift approvals and support for projects, and enable stronger linkages with the community. Although Afghan communities are reaching out to their provincial authorities and these to the central ministries, the response from the central level is often weak and fragmented. In the future, OTI should find improved ways of networking and relationship building with civil society to complement short-term governmental weakness, while at the same time working to strengthen governmental legitimacy and outreach.

- OTI should seek out and recreate successful projects of the past. OTI funded rehabilitation work in 15 ministry kindergartens that were culturally acceptable and remembered fondly from pre-war days. That the kindergartens were not new concepts made such projects easy to implement. The kindergartens brought female civil servants back to work who had been banished to their homes during the Taliban administration. Kindergarten rehabilitation also created a demand for more such facilities, signaling that women wanted to return in force to Afghanistan's public sphere.

OTI Use of Participatory Democratic Processes

- Community initiatives and government outreach activities cannot be undertaken in isolation. For greater effectiveness and impact, they should be undertaken together and be inextricably

linked using participatory processes. Greater involvement of community members in local project design, monitoring, and final approval is required. The creation by IOM of joint government-community tendering committees is an important step in the right direction, and this model could be more actively promoted by OTI in future programs.

- OTI's focus on community infrastructure, while important initially was not the only, nor the best means to promote community participatory processes. NGO stakeholders and some OTI staff feel that community infrastructure projects should have been undertaken for the first 12 months or so (to June 2003), and then funds should have been redirected to other community initiatives, such as micro-enterprises, peace building activities and other innovative projects.

- Income-generation projects received a mere 3% of community initiative funding and slightly over 1% of total funding. Income-generation projects aim to empower communities, especially women, in a manner distinct from other community-based programs. OTI should make far more use of these projects in its community-oriented "toolkit," but it will need to partner with well qualified (usually specialized) institutions to do so. Project content should focus as much or more on getting produce to market as on production skills.

- It is critical that OTI provide greater supervision to local grantee organizations, which represent a key source of innovation, confidence building, motivation, and dynamism essential for promoting community initiatives through decentralized and diversified strategies. To improve community impact, OTI needs to be sure its grantees establish relationships of trust, processes that are transparent, methods to appraise community needs and foment community engagement, and sustained participation.

- OTI should take risks with projects that encourage interaction and behavior change. Two resoundingly successful types of projects were not obvious "winners" in the initial stages; funding major independent media (Arman FM and Tolo TV) through non-media partners in a market where advertising was virtually unknown, and establishing a women's shura in a conservative Pashtun area. Both endeavors were the ideas of Afghans with a vision for the "new Afghanistan," who had successful track records, were willing to push the social agenda, and take calculated risks. These projects paid off more handsomely than typical small infrastructure rehabilitation projects that communities or government might have been able to do on their own.

- OTI should tackle difficult gender issues simply. In rural areas especially, non-literate Afghan women are vastly different from their educated, urban compatriots. Rural Afghan women are also invisible, seldom venturing beyond the walls of a compound. The simple fact is that Afghan women need more visibility. If they are visible, they exist; women who exist can play a role in society, receive education and health care, and vote. OTI and IOM focused on the mechanics of projects, schools, and complicated income-generation training. What women really need are culturally acceptable places to which they can travel outside the home. This simple physical movement, banned by the Taliban, places women in the public sphere and restores their freedom of movement.

I. BACKGROUND

Since the ouster of the Taliban regime by Coalition Forces in November 2001, Afghanistan has been following the provisions of the Bonn Agreement negotiated under UN auspices by major opposition and Diaspora leaders. The USAID/Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) has been in the forefront of assistance to Afghanistan since October 2001, when it began postwar planning from Pakistan. Responding to rapidly unfolding events in October and November, 2001, OTI supported the development of relevant and timely information on humanitarian assistance, particularly for internally displaced persons. By early January 2002, OTI advisors were in Afghanistan setting up the mechanisms by which rapid, flexible, and substantial assistance to the Afghan government and population could be provided. OTI remained operational inside Afghanistan for 3 ½ years.

OTI's overall goal in Afghanistan has been to support the process of recovery, rehabilitation and political development in post-conflict Afghanistan. OTI activities support USAID strategic priorities, which include infrastructure, food security, economic development, democracy and governance, and education and health. Working with central and provincial governments, national and international NGOs, community councils, and media outlets, OTI identified and supported critical initiatives that facilitated implementation of the Bonn Agreement and provided rapid, highly visible support designed to establish governmental credibility and space for longer-term development assistance.

Beyond support to the key events of the Bonn Agreement transition process, OTI has sought to build national, provincial and local governance capacities by engaging rural communities in planning and implementing projects guided by community priorities. At the same time that OTI sought to extend governmental presence and services into the regions, it has sought to connect communities to their government by means of quick-impact, quality-of-life infrastructure projects. Other important OTI achievements are the establishment of an independent communication network and implementation of a wide-ranging media strategy.

OTI's program in Afghanistan ended in June 2005. To date, OTI has given a total of $46.6 million to the program. Projects are funded in all 34 provinces of the country and some 714 grants and sub-grants were cleared for implementation.

OTI's funds for Afghanistan came from various sources, including Transition Initiative Funds (TI), International Disaster Assistance Funds (IDA), Development Assistance Funds (DA), and State Department Economic Support Funds (ESF). OTI's most recent implementing partners were the International Organization for Migration and Internews. IOM offices provided OTI field presence through seven regional offices: Bamyan, Gardez, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, and Mazar-e Sharif. Previous OTI partners included the Voice of America (VOA), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Ronco Consulting Corporation.

PREVIOUS PROGRAM ASSESSMENTS

There have been several other assessments of OTI program progress in Afghanistan, most notable of which were the recent evaluations of OTI assistance to the media sector[3] and the Afghanistan Transition Initiative funded through the International Organization for Migration.[4] A brief mid-term program assessment was carried out in late 2003.[5]

The media sector evaluation quite rightly praised the success of the program, particularly the creation of a loose network of independent community radio stations through successive grants to Internews. The network was launched in February 2003 and now numbers some 31 stations. OTI also supported production of quality current affairs and news programming that reached a national audience.

Over the course of 2003 and 2004, OTI also funded grants to launch the privately-held Radio Arman FM and Tolo TV. These stations have garnered a high degree of visibility and have had considerable cultural impact. The evaluation complains, however, that these large private stations fail to carry out any journalistic or public service role. Arman FM and Tolo TV are also in competition with the community-level stations, whose content has been oriented toward public service. To compete, this community network will have to place more emphasis on pure entertainment. Their sustainability in the face of phased-out subsidy has become an issue.

The ATI evaluation by Altai is broad and comprehensive, although not deep. Findings were generally quite positive, and it is obvious that the implementing partner IOM took great pains to conform to OTI wishes and signals. In so doing, ATI "was more of a political program that had to maintain adequate flexibility to meet the varying needs of USAID/OTI and the absorptive capacity of local stakeholders, especially the Afghan government."

ATI initially lacked a strategy, sector-based focus, or programmatic design, although a programmatic structure became clearer toward the end of program. Generally speaking, monitoring of grants "was neither substantive nor frequent." Nevertheless, OTI wanted quick, visible, and concrete signs of governmental viability, and IOM was able to maintain the pace. The evaluation states that "overall, IOM was able to implement projects rapidly within reasonable bounds on cost overruns, time extensions and quality parameters."

On the other hand, the mid-term assessment did raise the issue of poor quality of construction, as well as poor project selection and design. Overall, the assessment team found that the OTI program at the mid-term had a "mixed record of performance." Many of the weaknesses noted then were still noticeable at program end: project design and implementation difficulties; lack of awareness of the Afghan and U.S. government roles in projects; lack of community participation; and inadequate technical and performance monitoring.

[3] USAID/CDIE. March 2005. "USAID's Assistance to the Media Sector in Afghanistan."
[4] Altai Consulting. May 2005. "A Study of the Afghanistan Transition Initiative (ATI): Impact and Lessons Learned."
[5] OTI. December 2003. "Mid-term Program Assessment: Afghanistan. October 26 – November 7, 2003."

II. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVES

At the end of its first mega-program, the Office of Transition Initiatives sought to evaluate its experience in Afghanistan and obtain lessons learned for other mega-programs in the future. The OTI experience in Afghanistan has been at a totally different scale from its usual post-crisis interventions. Not only did OTI remain in-country for an unprecedented length of time (3 ½ years), but the budget was about ten times the average program budget. Beyond this there were a number of geographic, cultural, and security challenges not normally faced in a single country program.

This final evaluation of the OTI program in Afghanistan has been focused at OTI's request on three research questions. These questions were winnowed down from earlier versions to allow evaluators to concentrate on a few key issues of particular concern to USAID/OTI.

1. Was OTI strategic?

This question was designed to find out if OTI did its political analysis well and then acted accordingly. Was OTI's program targeted at the key transition needs, did it adjust when the situation called for new and different activities, did it take advantage of critical openings, and did it match its resources and activities to its strategy?

2. Did OTI promote government legitimacy?

This question addresses the objective of building confidence and awareness in a responsive national government that provides services to its citizens. Another part of this question seeks to determine if OTI contributed to connecting people to their government at the local and national levels. A definition of "connection" was required to answer this question.

3. Did OTI's use of participatory democratic processes increase citizen's connections to each other and to local authorities?

This question was designed to find out if participatory processes (such as building consensus on priority needs) were in fact used in OTI project communities, and if not why not. If they were used, did they contribute to increased and continued discussion among citizens?

METHODOLOGY

The final evaluation was undertaken by a team of four consultants: one senior evaluator and team leader (Philip Boyle); one female evaluation specialist (Martina Nicolls), one gender specialist (Anne Carlin), and one logistician (David Balwanz). The latter was responsible for arranging numerous interviews in both Washington and Afghanistan, and for all field travel logistics. All but the gender specialist were provided by Social Impact, Inc. under OTI's Program Development Quickly (PDQ) Indefinite Quantity Contract. PACT and DevTech Systems provided the gender specialist under contract to the USAID Office of Women in Development.

The investigatory stage of this final evaluation took place between April 26 and June 5, 2005, followed by several weeks of report writing. In a first period from April 26 to May 12, consultants met with numerous current and previous participants in the OTI program in Washington, D.C. Some previous participants were contacted and interviewed by telephone.

From May 14 to June 4 the evaluation team was in the field in Afghanistan, where it continued to interview a wide variety of former and current participants in, or observers of, OTI program activities. The logistician had traveled to Afghanistan one week earlier and remained for two weeks to facilitate lodging, travel, and interview arrangements and scheduling.

The team relied on semi-structured interview questions in its numerous meetings with participants and stakeholders. From May 14 to May 20, meetings were held in Kabul. At this time, the team made its final decision on field sites to be visited. A range of sites had been proposed by OTI, along with the advantages and disadvantages of each. Given time constraints, the team decided to combine two long-distance visits with two field visits close to Kabul. In order to ensure a wide spread of ethnic, cultural, and local political differences, trips to and around Mazar-e Sharif and Kandahar were planned. Short visits to Parwan province north of Kabul and southeast to Paktia province were also carried out. Visits ranged from one day in Parwan to five days in Kandahar. In the field, the team was assisted by a translator, Waheeda Ghazialam.

Beginning May 21, the team began their round of field visits: May 21 in Parwan province; May 22-24 in Mazar-e Sharif (Balkh and Samangan provinces); May 26-30 in Kandahar (Kandahar and Helmand provinces); and June 1-2 in Gardez (Paktia province). In these field visits, interviews were conducted with key staff of the implementing partner – the International Organization for Migration (IOM) – and with participants and stakeholders of numerous small grant community activities. Specific projects were often targeted in advance by the team, but had to be finalized with IOM in initial meetings in regional offices. Sought-after projects were not only representative of IOM community-level activities, but could also be visited safely in the short-time available in the field. Altogether, some 95 of 714 (13%) OTI sub-grants were examined, usually involving a field inspection visit. Lists of small-grant projects visited and persons interviewed are in annex (see Annexes A and B).

III. FINDINGS

CHAPTER 1: STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS AND RELEVANCE OF THE OTI AFGHANISTAN PROGRAM

This section examines the degree to which the USAID Office of Transition Initiatives operated strategically in Afghanistan over the 3 ½ years of its program. Operating strategically implies having some type of analytical framework within which programming can be channeled. Such a framework may be formal or informal, complex or simple, rigid or flexible, and long or short term. Operating strategically also implies programmatic consistency within the agreed analytical framework, at least until the framework is revised and agreed upon by those charged with program development and monitoring.

Initial Strategic Thinking

In view of its short-term, rapid-response, political transitional mission, it is reasonable to question whether OTI should have any strategy. However, the considerable work that went into strategic thinking in the first ten months of its Afghanistan program certainly indicates that some in OTI were keenly interested in approaching their mission as strategically as possible.

Strategic thinking can be found from the beginning of the Afghanistan program in October 2001, when initial OTI staff and advisors were still located in Peshawar, Pakistan. A flurry of short documents, reviewed below, records much of this early brainstorming and strategizing. After July 2002, the paper trail diminishes considerably, although some strategizing is evident about every six to nine months thereafter. In any case, the basic strategic orientation set in place by early 2003 seems not to have changed significantly down to the end of program.

A brainstorming session in mid-October 2001 produced perhaps the first recorded strategic thinking on the future Afghanistan program. The two-page document covers possible future objectives, as well as recommendations on start-up, implementation, and possible activities.[6] Future objectives appear to be based on experience in Kosovo, in which emphasis is on citizens' voice in reconstruction and nation-building, community education, and good governance through government strengthening. In spite of a recommendation to avoid assessments in this first document, some were indeed carried out in initial program planning.

An email from the acting OTI director to staff and consultants in Pakistan in late November 2001 clearly stresses the need for strategic planning.[7] It proposes that a planning team be set up in Islamabad. The acting director says: "The essential thing is to get people out there who can help us plan and really analyze the information that is available. Without that sort of effort, we will have to turn to cookie-cutter strategies that only have to be thrown out later when we finally are able to do field-based analysis."

[6] USAID/OTI. "OTI Brainstorming on Afghanistan, 10/18." October 18, 2001.
[7] Gottlieb, Gregory. Email Correspondance. November 30, 2001.

Out of this early focus on planning based on field realities came a short document entitled "Afghan Community-based Transition Programming."[8] The model appears to be based primarily on the OTI experience in Kosovo and East Timor.[9] The document indicates that rapidly moving resources to involve "an on-the-ground community-based process" will demonstrate a "peace dividend." However, the emphasis is far less on demonstrating government legitimacy, outreach, and efficiency than on establishing a platform serving to establish and maintain "community presence in support of collaborative, inclusive community-based decision-making processes." It is suggested that "engaging Afghan communities in assistance planning and implementation is also a highly effective vehicle for promoting basic civic organization, democratic principles, and empowering heretofore marginalized groups such as women and youth."

The community-based transition model is defined in this document as evolutionary, rather than static, as it shifts from immediate needs to longer-term development undertakings. There is the clear expectation that OTI implementing partners will have a significant field presence and will maintain a "deep and continuous contact with partner communities." A strong justification for this approach is that it would be some time before the central government could establish a strong presence in rural areas and there was an immediate and strong opportunity in the meantime to focus on "citizen empowerment."

This community transition focus was eventually embodied as one of the three final OTI/Afghanistan program objectives that emerged by early 2003. These objectives were: (1) Increase the Afghan government's responsiveness to citizens' needs; (2) Increase citizen awareness of and participation in democratic processes; and, (3) Increase the capacity of the Afghan media. It seems there was a strong bias among some in OTI to focus primarily on a bottom-up empowerment process as an end in itself, not just as a means for citizens to appreciate and have increased trust in their new government. On the other hand, there were clearly others within OTI that favored focusing more on strengthening the legitimacy and outreach of the central government. This is echoed by a short memo by an OTI staffer or advisor that declaimed that "an assumption should be made that the notion of population participation is a joke."[10] The author goes on to urge that OTI activities focus on urban and peri-urban areas and connecting Kabul to outlying areas, and stresses the need to "build alliances and trust within the government first."

This dichotomy of perspective is found in a number of early documents, including one from October 2001 entitled "Immediate DG Assistance in a post-Taliban Afghanistan."[11] A number of points are made that focus solely on strengthening the legitimacy of a new government. There is no attention paid to ensuring government legitimacy through involving communities in participatory, empowering, local development activities. What is stressed is achieving "competent, honest governance, including commitment to the rule of law."

Another early document points out that while over the previous seven years OTI "has maintained an operating philosophy that providing support to the local level breeds stability at the national

[8] USAID/OTI. "Afghan Community-Based Transition Programming." January 9, 2002.
[9] A section on OTI experience refers to recent experience in East Timor and Kosovo.
[10] USAID/OTI. Field Notes. N.D.
[11] USAID/OTI. "Immediate DG Assistance in a post-Taliban Afghanistan." October 29, 2001.

level," it was recommended that OTI focus first on strengthening the central government by filling critical government gaps and "making things happen."[12] Only after this should OTI create a mechanism that "allows local groups input into the decision-making process and providing the 'peace dividend' to local factions." What is sought here is not community empowerment *per se* but co-option of local factions into local government controlled by the central authority.

Yet another of these early strategy documents is a one-pager on "DOs and DON'Ts" to guide the future program in Afghanistan.[13] At the top of the list to do was "improve government's visibility, credibility, responsiveness, and effectiveness." This has remained the key U.S. foreign policy objective down to the present. Further down the list, community involvement is reflected in a number of points, including: (1) carrying out community assessments; (2) maximizing community input; (3) supporting community-identified priorities; and (4) producing benefits targeted to a "significant" part of the community.

In this same to do list, projects are supposed to respond to the usual OTI approach. They should *inter alia*: (1) be highly visible; (2) have immediate impact; (3) actively involve government counterparts; (4) maximally involve women, returnees, and ex-combatants; (5) serve as catalysts for other or "add-on" projects; (6) be of high quality; and (7) be sustainable.

The admonition in this planning document to do projects of high quality, that are sustainable, and that can lead to follow-on activities in the same communities appears not to have been followed during the remainder of the Afghanistan program. Moreover, in contradiction to the general belief that OTI need not concern itself with sustainability, it is clearly stated that: "Think always about project sustainability. If the chances of sustainability are low, it's probably a good idea to move on."

While both the governmental strengthening and community empowerment approaches were eventually included in OTI's short-list of objectives, there is a continuing shift of emphasis between the two in strategic documents throughout programming. Moreover, it would seem that neither of these strategic orientations had quite the success that planners hoped. This is discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Initial Program Assessment

Strategic thinking gained momentum, even as OTI funded its first major program in Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Emergency Information Project (October 2001 – April 2002). While this program focused on distribution of some 36,000 small short-wave radios to internally-displaced and returning refugee populations, it was also used as a funding source for an overall program assessment.

[12] Stukel, Thomas. Memorandum. No date.
[13] USAID/OTI. "DOs and DON'Ts." October 22, 2002. (Refers specifically to Afghanistan).

OTI funded this three-week pre-program assessment by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in late January and early February 2002.[14] Due to security concerns, it was not carried out in the south and southeast, but it still managed to cover 10 of 34 provinces.

At OTI's behest, the focus of the assessment was the viability of an OTI-financed participatory community-based recovery and empowerment program. This participatory program would be "aimed at increasing citizen participation in emerging political processes, while simultaneously addressing key recovery needs as defined by the communities themselves." Since community-based projects are one of the principal themes in OTI's political transition work, it was important to see if such an approach could be employed in Afghanistan.[15]

While determining that a community approach was viable, since communities had a tradition of self-organization and experience with donor organizations (IOs and NGOs), the assessment concluded that it was far more important to emphasize "the development of functioning bureaucratic structures and ministries at the district and provincial levels that adequately respond to community priorities." Secondarily, an additional program component aimed at "strengthening links between the central Kabul government and regional/provincial ministries is also possible and much needed." Since the country was enormous and community needs vast, what was feasible was "assisting the government structures to work with communities in each step of a community development process." The assessment stressed the point that it would be "through support of district and provincial government structures and by supporting the Bonn Process that local communities, community councils, and Afghanistan in general can gain the most sustainable benefits."

In response to these recommendations and through early experience, OTI's traditional emphasis on community-based projects seems to have shifted to place more emphasis on building government-community relations than on community organization, mobilization, ethnic reconciliation, broad-based benefits, and inclusion of disadvantaged groups. The extreme weakness of the central government and the lack of experience of communities in dealing with any central government made this reorientation highly desirable.

The 2002-2003 Strategies

The first overtly strategic document in the archives is entitled "Short-term Strategy through June, 2002."[16] This one-pager identifies a goal and five objectives, for which some future activities are proposed.

Goal: Facilitate a peaceful transition and broad recovery in Afghanistan.

[14] International Organization for Migration (IOM). "OTI/AEIP Afghanistan Assessment: Possibilities and Challenges of an Afghanistan Participatory Community-Based Recovery Program." February 11, 2002.
[15] Cf. Office of Transition Initiatives. "A Decade of Transition: 1994 – 2004." 2004.
[16] Aplon, Jason. "Short Term Strategy Through 6/02." March 27, 2002.

Objectives:

- Support the Afghanistan Interim Authority (AIA) to more effectively govern throughout Afghanistan.
- Support voices of moderation and peace throughout Afghanistan.
- Build stronger connections between civil society and emerging government structures.
- Increase the availability and quality of public information.
- Support increased citizen and community participation in decision-making processes.

OTI Strategy of March 2002

By March 2002 the first formal OTI/Afghanistan strategy paper was produced.[17] It was modified in April and again in July 2002. Given the complexity and fluidity of the transitional environment in Afghanistan, USAID/OTI's strategy claimed the right to evolve as needs and conditions changed. The integration of recovery assistance that addresses quality-of-life issues for communities with a political development agenda is a defining feature. The future program and its mechanisms were designed to be flexible enough to address a wide range of community recovery investments. The activity prioritization process would be participatory and demand-driven, including a range of Afghan stakeholders in the process. The political development aspect of the program would emphasize empowering and increasing participation from the bottom-up, while simultaneously supporting the visibility of the Afghan government and its governmental processes.

The March 2002 strategy stated that the second phase of the program, beginning about September 2002, should be based on the successes and lessons learned from the implementation of the first phase. Phase II should see an increase in the role of civic groups in OTI programming and an expansion of public information efforts, as depth of understanding was increased and technological constraints were overcome. With increasing political stability, more resources should flow to projects related to public education, dialogue, and public/governmental discourse and participation by funding activities that increase citizen's engagement in what was hoped would be a growing discourse on the direction of Afghan society.

However, there is no documentation from this period that indicates that an analysis was conducted or that these lessons learned were incorporated into a Phase II strategic orientation. The program objectives of the March 2002 strategy are quite similar to those of the first short-term strategy, but an additional quality-of-life objective was placed right up front.

[17] USAID/OTI. "Afghanistan Strategy, March 2002." March 2002.

What	How
1. Improve the quality-of-life and facilitate the broader recovery of Afghanistan.	Rehabilitate small-scale physical infrastructure essential for demonstrating a 'peace dividend.'
2. Support the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA) to more effectively govern throughout Afghanistan.	Provide the tools necessary to carry out its functions and extend its influence beyond Kabul.
3. Support the emergence of greater citizen participation and government accountability.	Promote inclusive processes of project identification and implementation between authorities and citizens.
4. Support voices of moderation and peace.	Actively seek out non-governmental Afghans to participate in various aspects of programming and development.
5. Build stronger connections between civil society and emerging government structures.	Engage key civic groups as partners to link communities and government entities in the identification and implementation of projects –with particular attention to women and women's issues.
6. Increase the availability and quality of public information.	Support media development and information dissemination projects.

OTI Strategy of April 2002

In April 2002, a revised version of the initial strategy was produced that aligned OTI objectives with emerging USAID goals.[18] A concise program goal, lacking in March, is identified as "providing support to the process of rehabilitation and political stabilization in post-conflict Afghanistan." The strategy continues to propose a "two-phased program to build citizen confidence in the progress of political development, empower citizens to address basic community needs, and build an alliance between legitimate government structures and citizens." Phase I is indicated as lasting through the Loya Jirga process, with Phase II dependent on a peaceful, successful Loya Jirga. Although the number of objectives remains six, two objectives are reformulated, placing less emphasis on quality-of-life and government-community linkages.

OTI Strategy of July 2002

The formal post-Loya Jirga strategy document is dated July 2002, but it is in draft, and it is not clear when or if it was finalized.[19] No overall goal is enunciated, but OTI clearly tried to position itself within a broader USAID strategic framework that had not yet been fully defined.

Eight OTI program objectives are presented in the document, along with the general actions to reach them. The strategy appears designed to cover the period leading to the presidential election about two years later (later postponed). The document also indicates that with improvement in the humanitarian, political, and security situation as well as the launching of longer-term development projects, OTI would begin to reduce funding for quick-impact projects and focus more heavily on the "qualitative objectives of the program." The latter included longer-term high impact projects, citizen participation and government accountability, media development and information dissemination, and institutional support for the Afghan government. In spite of this, the heavy emphasis on quick-impact projects continued to the end of the OTI program. As of July 2002, OTI program objectives were:

[18] USAID/OTI. "Afghanistan Transition Strategy, April 2002." April 2002.
[19] USAID/OTI. "Afghanistan Transition Strategy, July 2002 (Draft). July 2002.

What	How
1. Support the peace process.	Ensure that the next election reflects the will of an Afghan population that is educated on election processes, and their roles and responsibilities as citizens of a democratic country.
2. Improve the quality of life and facilitate the broader recovery of Afghanistan.	Rehabilitate small-scale physical infrastructure essential for demonstrating a 'peace dividend'.
3. Support the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (TISA) to more effectively govern throughout Afghanistan.	Provide technical assistance and institutional support needed to carry out State functions and extend its influence beyond Kabul to the local level.
4. Support the emergence of greater citizen participation and government accountability.	Undertake inclusive processes of project identification and implementation between authorities and citizens.
5. Support voices of moderation and peace.	Actively seek out non-governmental Afghans to participate in various aspects of programming and development.
6. Build stronger connections between civil society and emerging government structures.	Engage key civic groups as partners to bridge communities and government entities in the identification and implementation of projects – with particular attention to women and women's issues.
7. Build stronger connections between the work of the CHLCs (Civilian Humanitarian Liaison Cells with the U.S. military) and the International Organizations (IOs).	The USAID/OTI field program manager is to facilitate these connections.
8. Increase the availability and quality of public information.	Support media development and information dissemination projects.

Post-Loya Jirga Strategic Thinking

The draft July 2002 strategy, a basic repackaging of the March and April versions, opened up debate within USAID about what OTI was to do in a post-Loya Jirga world. It was recognized in a senior OTI advisor's email in mid-July 2002 that "while the general framework and broad objectives may remain the same, it is clear that in this post-Jirga period OTI will have to bring much more focus to its objectives, and potentially broaden its methods to remain relevant."[20] The question was also raised in this email of whether OTI work would "remain limited to 'bricks and mortar and small procurements for the government' or whether we will target our efforts on a few key objectives and potentially expand the ways in which we try to address key objectives." Other questions concerned how OTI might assist the government "in a stepwise and not random fashion."

The same email raises the concern that OTI staff in the field "might be inclined to 'back into a strategy' rather than take a creative and proactive approach." The comments go on to say that "we might be limiting our creativity by assuming that we can only engage in those activities that already fit our tools as they are currently being used." This was especially regretted because there was so much flexibility in the Ronco and IOM contracting mechanisms.

There is no indication that OTI significantly shifted its strategic orientation, tactical approaches, or tools at this point or later, but rather continued on with much the same emphasis on infrastructure projects and media development as before. There are some exceptions, such as the

[20] Aplon, Jason. Email Correspondance. July 12, 2002.

peace building/conflict resolution grants and a continued focus on support to the key benchmarks of the Bonn Agreement.

While the media program has enjoyed considerable critical success, the same cannot be said for the accomplishments of the small-scale community projects (cf. Chapter 3). Although this local-level infrastructure was built at a dizzying rate, there is no body of evidence to indicate a correlation between such activities and increased community cohesion, local democratic conduct, and greater trust in local or central government.

March 2003 Strategy

The next – and last – OTI strategy document available in the archives is dated March 2003 and specifically addresses the post-Loya Jirga program. [21] However, the strategy reads as if it had been written earlier, since it refers to the Constitutional Loya Jirga "to be held within the next two years."

In this document, objectives have been reduced from eight to three and reflect a bottom-up perspective.

- Build citizen confidence in the progress of political development.
- Empower citizens to address basic community needs.
- Develop alliances and linkages among legitimate government structures and citizens.

However, a second version of this March 2003 strategy was substituted for the first in August 2003, although it retained the March date. Another document from August 2003 is consistent with these changes. In this second version, objectives have swung back to a more top-down orientation, although the goal, program approaches, and actions remain virtually the same. Emphasis is placed on strengthening the capacity of the Afghan central government and media to carry out the desired changes at the community level. The new objectives now read:

- Increase the capacity of the Afghan government.
- Increase the capacity of the Afghan media.
- Increase public information on the political process.

This March/August strategy document reveals a growing OTI frustration with: (1) the ability of government to deliver basic services to communities and engage in collaborative rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts; (2) the lack of effective communication vertically between national ministries and provincial delegations and horizontally between the latter; and (3) the failure of the media to support greater public understanding and discussion of critical national and local issues. Each of these three challenges was to be addressed by a program approach, in which it becomes clear that increased governmental capacity is defined as its improved ability to promote community cohesion, develop linkages between local government and communities, and promote government communication and outreach to local communities.

[21] Office of Transition Initiatives. "Afghanistan Post Loya Jirga Program." March 2003.

Program Approach	Actions
1. Increase the capacity of the Afghan government to promote community cohesion and develop positive linkages between local government and communities.	OTI will fund community development projects that have been identified as local priorities by local citizens. During this process, OTI will develop local government-local community linkages with specific contributions from both parties.
2. Increase the capacity of the Afghan government by promoting government communication and outreach to local communities.	OTI will establish provincial communication centers to coordinate reconstruction and other governance issues. OTI will support a series of seminars for national and district officials on development and management skills.
3. Increase the capacity of the Afghan media by enhancing the quality of media programming and increase the number of media outlets.	OTI will support journalist training, media policy development, and the development of independent media outlets throughout the country, including funding civic information programs and promoting dissemination of critical information.

Strategic Objectives of the Performance Monitoring Plans

A first, partial Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) in August 2003 listed program objectives much the same as those of the revised March 2003 strategy, with the addition of an objective on increasing the capacity of Afghan civil society groups.[22] No program goal was given. The goal and objectives presented in the midterm assessment (December 2003) continue to remain closely consistent with goals and objectives defined (or revised) previously in 2003.

However, by the second partial PMP of March 2004, these objectives had shifted back to a strong bottom-up, people-level focus.[23] The program goal was now to increase citizen awareness and confidence in the process of recovery, rehabilitation, and democratic political development in post-conflict Afghanistan. The three new objectives were:

- Increase communication and interaction between citizens and government.
- Increase citizen awareness of the peace process, government policies and plans, and positive political developments.
- Increase citizen participation in democratic processes.

By the final, full PMP of mid-2004, objectives had shifted once again, but they did not shift again, except for the removal of an objective dealing with Afghan civil society (cf. discussion of the full PMP below).

The shifting wording of the OTI/Afghanistan goal and objectives is a little perplexing, although it is obvious that the same general top-down, bottom-up, and media approaches were followed from the beginning. However, it is certainly unlikely that these different formulations reflect strategic shifts according to changing environment, circumstances, and opportunities. Far more likely is that successive OTI field representatives reworded or reconceptualized these objectives, according to their own preferences and perspectives, although there is no archival evidence to support this. Moreover, there is no indication that rewording of objectives or shifting emphasis between the top-down or bottom-up approaches reflected any shifts in program activities.

[22] USAID/OTI/Afghanistan. "Program Objectives, Output Indicators, Impacts, and Impact Indicator Questions." August 7, 2003.
[23] USAID/OTI. "Objectives/Sample Indicators." March 3, 2004.

However, it should be noted in reference to objective formulation that wording is very important when it comes to deciding how to measure progress toward objectives. Concepts such as awareness, cohesion, and confidence are more difficult to define and measure than capacity, strength, outreach, participation, and interaction, although none of these is easy to grapple with in the Afghan context.

Team-building Meetings (TBMs)

OTI and IOM respondents indicate a variable number of TBMs over the last 3 ½ years, certainly confusing minor meetings with more strategic sessions. Ideally, these meetings of implementing partner and OTI personnel were held every six months. Although they may have dealt most often with how to be more efficient in existing operations, they provided a clear opportunity to appraise the program and shift it strategically as necessary.

There appear to have been at least three major meetings, in which big-picture strategy issues were discussed. Although documentation on these meetings is lacking, some of the strategies found in the archives may well have come directly from decisions taken there.

According to participants in these TBMs, OTI was always concerned to be strategic and to keep its eye on the transition process, in order to fine-tune its program. The first TBM defined the pre-Loya Jirga strategy about March 2002 in a one-day joint session between OTI, the head of IOM-Afghanistan Transition Initiative (ATI), and some USAID/Embassy personnel. A second, three-day TBM was held just after the Emergency Loya Jirga in June 2002 and corresponded to the arrival of a new (acting) Country Representative and a field program advisor. The heads of IOM-ATI field offices also attended this meeting. A third major strategy session about May 2004 lasted one week and appears to have brought together in Kabul OTI representatives and a significant number of IOM/ATI headquarters and field program staff. Judging from the strategy formulations of March and August 2003, there may well also have been TBMs at those junctures.

Framing and guiding OTI strategy development was what might be called an operational "super-strategy:" keeping horizons open and money in reserve, in order to shift gears rapidly to address fast-unfolding situations. Keeping money in reserve, however, had its drawbacks, since idle money could be rapidly co-opted by the Embassy or the USAID Mission. Most OTI and other U.S. government informants, however, minimize the impact on OTI programming of such "slush fund" use.

Performance Monitoring Plan (June 2004)

In its third important TBM toward the middle of 2004, OTI engaged in a major process of formalizing its strategic approach.[24] A serious attempt was made to identify program performance indicators. However, it is unclear why a full PMP should have been developed so close to the beginning of OTI phase-out.

[24] USAID/OTI. "USAID/OTI Afghanistan Performance Monitoring Plan." June 29, 2004.

This strategic planning exercise involved key implementing partner staff (IOM and Internews) alongside OTI managers and Foreign Service nationals (FSNs). For the first time, OTI planning adopted a logical framework format, focusing on objectives, performance indicators, and data collection methods and responsibilities. There is no indication, however, that there was any follow-up to the exercise. Nor did the principal contractor IOM appear to have understood the exercise or embraced it seriously, as noted by a senior OTI advisor preparing materials for the final evaluation in April 2005.[25] In any case, the PMP exercise and its results are important, because they illustrate the belief in some quarters that OTI program activities can be placed in a logical framework, particularly after the early stages of an intervention. Although one of the four objectives of the PMP has subsequently been removed, the remaining three and the program goal have not changed.[26]

Goal: Increase citizen awareness and confidence in the process of recovery, rehabilitation, and democratic political development in post-conflict Afghanistan.

Objectives:

- Increase the Afghan government's responsiveness to citizen's needs.
- Increase capacity of the Afghan media.
- Increase citizen awareness of and/or participation in democratic processes.
- Increase capacity of Afghan civil society groups (subsequently removed from OTI objectives.)

This is the kind of focused PMP that could have been developed in the period following the first Loya Jirga (June 2002). However, the PMP is meant to be a management tool in which realistic indicators can be tracked by someone given responsibility for doing so. Ideally all program managers would have their eye on these indicators and collect data accordingly. Although both IOM and OTI had M&E specialists by the middle of 2004, they did not go beyond monitoring sub-grant project completions.

OTI Media Strategy in Afghanistan

Within overall OTI strategic orientations, only media development seems to have developed an effective sub-strategy of its own. This began in the Post-Loya Jirga period. In August 2002, a media strategy was formulated by the OTI/Washington media advisor. Although involving some attention to print media, the vast majority of the strategy involved the broadcast media, which had been a State monopoly until February 2002. This offered an excellent window of opportunity for OTI.

While media work through the Emergency Loya Jirga (June 2002) had been responsive to the urgent need for emergency information and support to the early stages of political transition, it

[25] Rigby, John. Memorandum on First Midterm Assessment. April 26, 2005.

[26] Objective 4 referred only to activities undertaken in FY 2002, and it was later removed from the final set of OTI/Afghanistan objectives. It should be noted that the purpose of a PMP as a management tool is to manage forward, not retroactively account for activities and inputs used two years previously.

was now seen necessary to continue support to the Afghan government to consolidate and strengthen its authority. The strategy was designed to cover the period between the creation of the transitional Afghan government (June 2002) and the drafting and approval of the new constitution (December 2003).

Media strategy objectives were: (1) the drafting and adoption of a new, Western-style media law; (2) production of radio programs and materials for existing broadcasting and related institutions to enable the Afghan government to "highlight progress and educate the public about important national and development issues;" and (3) support to the start-up of the first truly independent radio stations in Afghanistan. In the final analysis, it was this last component of the strategy that had the most success and the most likely impact.

In summary, the ultimate goal of this strategy to develop a free media and promote public information was to strengthen the new Afghan government by raising its profile and increasing public confidence and support. There seems little doubt that the 31 independent stations created by OTI under this media strategy have had more impact on opening Afghan hearts and minds than one or a few local infrastructure projects.

Afghanistan Transition Initiative (ATI)

Originally known as the Community Improvement Governance Initiative (CIGI), the Afghanistan Transition Initiative was the major vehicle for implementing the OTI program, beyond media development by Internews and early infrastructural and logistical support to central government through Ronco. The ATI fully addressed two of the three final OTI program objectives and part of the third – the media development objective.

The ATI implementation partner – the International Organization for Migration (IOM) – has retroactively established five phases of ATI operations that certainly imply more strategic awareness than was the case at the time.[27] [28] Nevertheless, these phases are helpful in understanding how the direct program implementers now perceive the evolution of their assistance activities. As the ATI final evaluation (May 2005) correctly points out, some of these programmatic shifts were due to changes in beneficiary focus, while others depended on the growing capacity of IOM and Afghan governmental staff.[29]

Phase I (March to June 2002) focused on rapidly providing highly visible projects that would demonstrate the benefits of peace under a new, Western-backed central government. These benefits constituted the "peace dividend." What was important at this stage was "standing up" the government and having it provide something concrete to the Afghanistan population.

Phase II (June 2002 to October 2002) focused on supporting direct interaction between communities and provincial governmental departments. IOM/ATI avoided interacting directly

[27] International Organization for Migration. "ATI Phase Four." January 2005.
[28] International Organization for Migration. "The Afghanistan Transition Initiative: March 2002 – June 2005." Volumes on "Infrastructure" and "Direct Government Support and Government Buildings." May 2005.
[29] Altai Consulting. "A Study of the Afghanistan Transition Initiative (ATI): Impact and Lessons Learned." May 2005.

with communities as they had in Phase I, but rather promoted direct meetings and consultations between community members and provincial government representatives. The objective of these meetings was to provide community-requested government services to the Afghan population. More important than which services were provided was the initiation of a new relationship between communities and local government, based on democratic principles of dialogue and negotiation.

Phase III (October 2002 to March 2003) focused on integrating the strengthened central government into the provision of services to communities. Community grant-funded activities now required "no-objection" letters at both provincial delegation and central ministerial levels. The process of linking communities and government included interaction between communities and the provincial government during identification and development stages, as well as interaction between provincial government and the national government. The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) became a major partner of IOM-ATI and engaged in a national project prioritization process that identified and ranked four projects in each district. During this phase, ATI began promoting gender-specific projects and began to consider gender issues in ATI programming.

Phase IV (March 2003 to June 2004) focused on forging linkages directly between the national government and communities across all sectors of activity to encourage public confidence in the government and the constitutional process. Civic education relating to the new constitution and voter registration for the presidential election were important additional activities. ATI now reacted directly to requests from the national government for activities in specific communities. ATI also began to use "captive audiences" involved in infrastructure projects to pass messages on the new constitution, voter registration, and future elections. Finally, ATI began actively mainstreaming women as much as possible into all community projects.

Phase V (June 2004 to June 2005) has focused on closing down the ATI program and passing on its accomplishments and lessons learned to longer-term development programs. One aspect of this final phase was the repair of flawed or degenerating infrastructure projects, in order to leave behind a high percentage of good quality projects. In some cases, these repairs were needed only because of normal wear and tear on infrastructure. Some 34 projects of this type were carried out in the final months of the program.

In summary, the post-Loya Jirga implementation phases (Phases II – IV) represent somewhat idealized stages of increasing governmental involvement with local community rehabilitation and restoration activities. As pointed out previously, the basic methodology for mobilizing rural communities and linking them with their government at increasingly higher levels has been through infrastructure projects, and this approach to communities has not changed greatly from June 2002. What primarily changes across these phases is the strength and competence of the Afghan government and the linkages between provincial delegations and national ministries. Nevertheless, government/community linkages are still highly financially and organizationally dependent on donor organizations.

The breakout of these five phases would seem to indicate conscious strategic shifts, but the early program strategy documents indicate that all of these actions were anticipated from the

beginning. Nor does the OTI representative in Afghanistan between June 2002 and October 2003 remember hearing talk of phases, although OTI worked closely with IOM during the whole of the program. It is clear, however, that OTI and IOM kept their eye on the broad objective of creating a new, service-oriented Afghan government that was not only responsive to community requests, but could also deliver concrete results within a reasonable period.

Strategy within Gender Programming

As OTI developed its program for Afghanistan in October 2001, support for Afghan women already existed at the highest levels of the U.S. administration. On November 17, 2001, just days after the Taliban capitulation, First Lady Laura Bush gave a national radio address that highlighted the Taliban's brutality. At the same time, the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor issued the "Report on the Taliban's War on Women." A month later, President Bush signed into law the "Afghan Women and Children Relief Act 2001," designed to support education and health care.

Programming U.S. foreign policy rhetoric into reality, however, was and remains extremely challenging. The publicity that highlighted the plight of the Afghan women was not supported on the ground by the programming OTI offered. While no one expected OTI or the U.S. government to resolve every problem faced by Afghan women, the spotlight shone by the U.S. on Afghan women living under Taliban rule raised expectations that assisting Afghan females in post-Taliban Afghanistan would be a top priority.

OTI, as the quick-response mechanism supporting U.S. foreign policy in transition countries, could have selected one issue affecting Afghan women to which it could respond strategically. However, OTI responded with mostly small, seemingly haphazard projects. No coherent strategy to support Afghan females was developed by OTI to demonstrate consistent, nationwide U.S. support for the women whom U.S. forces had apparently liberated. Nevertheless, during its time in Afghanistan, OTI funded meaningful and important projects that benefited women. A review of gender-oriented programming can be found in a companion report entitled "OTI Afghanistan Program Evaluation: Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives and Impacts."[30]

In OTI's post-Loya Jirga strategy (July 2002), the only objective of eight that mentioned women dealt with civil society and government structures. It proposed that OTI programs: "Build stronger connections between civil society and emerging government structures by engaging key civic groups as partners to bridge communities and government entities in the identification and implementation of projects with particular attention to women and women's issues."

While only given lip service in OTI strategic objectives, attention to gender issues nevertheless constituted a theme underlying much of OTI programming. This was particularly evident in the early days of the OTI program. The first OTI staff member (senior advisor) into Kabul in early January 2002 specifically recalls that assistance to the Ministry of Women's Affairs underlay some of the first grants made by the International Organization for Migration (February 2002).[31] In the same month, a gender sectoral expert was one of five American long-term technical

[30] The gender evaluation was carried out in conjunction with the overall evaluation.
[31] Stukel, Thomas. Telephone interview. May 12, 2005.

experts hired by OTI for USAID through IOM.[32] Finally, a brief, "initial" gender assessment was also produced in this early period, although there is no evidence of any later, more detailed assessment.[33]

During the interim period from the December 2001 Bonn Agreement to the June 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga, 81 grants totaling $8.97 million were approved by OTI. Of these, 29 had a component targeting women and girls. Although this represented 35% of projects, they totaled just $1.05 million, or about 12 % of funding. Projects included girls' and coeducational school rehabilitation, kindergarten rehabilitation in key ministries, hospital renovation, and support to the newly created Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA).

Following the creation of the Traditional Islamic State of Afghanistan on June 16, 2002, the U.S. government gained significant confidence in Afghanistan's future stability. In the next 18 months through the Constitutional Loya Jirga, overall OTI grant approval increased from an average of 13.8 to 21.3 grants per month, although this was not reflected in a proportionate increase in grants with a component targeting women and children. These increased from 4.3 to 4.9 project grants per month.

Over this 18-month period, 89 of 394 (23%) of grants approved by OTI had a gender component, according to the OTI database. This represented some 28% of total funding in this period.

In June 2002, OTI issued a document to implementing partners outlining the funding criteria for small projects, those ranging from $5,000 to $50,000. The criteria included supporting the Afghan government, promoting ethnic balance, encouraging community participation, and reintegrating women into society. The criteria provided policy direction, but lacked detail or guidance.

During this period, OTI began to fund activities specifically targeting women's income generation, although such projects were in contradiction to USAID gender mainstreaming policy. Some 13 projects totaling $294,000 (1.5% of funds this period) supported income generation training for small-scale, traditional activities related to tailoring, poultry raising, literacy, business literacy, food hygiene, market gardening, and beekeeping. According to IOM staff, training women in health and education topics was the real objective, but this seems unlikely since most attention was focused on skills training. Female (and male) community members were highly disappointed when these schemes failed to generate desired income, primarily because income-generation training was not sufficiently supported with marketing skills.

In early January 2003, OTI agreed to support the construction and furnishing of 14 Provincial Women's Centers (PWCs) that would facilitate training, research and communications. The United States committed $2.5 million over two years to construct the centers. Since Afghanistan has 34 provinces, 14 provinces were selected by MoWA with the assistance of the USAID/OTI gender advisor.

[32] Other sectors covered were health, education, agriculture, and democracy and governance
[33] "Afghanistan's Initial Gender Needs Assessment." February 6, 2002.

The $2.5 million constituted a funded earmark and mandate by Congress in supplemental legislation approved in late 2002. OTI had not chosen to construct these centers, but was directed to do so. Nor did anyone foresee the difficulties that would arise. Two and a half years after approving this construction program through IOM, only a handful of centers have opened.

During this period, IOM also proposed adding a provision to all construction contracts that a certain percentage of workers should be female. IOM debated this issue and came up with a figure of 6.3%, determined by averaging estimates from the various regional offices. OTI missed an opportunity here to have more thoughtfully considered a way to require contractors to hire women and promote a proactive and more rational approach to IOM. Afghan women are often eager to work, and men will support activities that bring more income into the household.

During the period extending from the CLJ to President Karzai's election (November 2004), grant-making for projects with female beneficiaries remained unfocused and unsubstantial. Forty-six of 182 total grants – about 25% – had at least one component targeting women. This figure of $1.63 million represented about 12% of total funding during this period.

Fourteen grants totaling $279,000 (2% of funding in this period) supported mostly traditional income-generation projects for women, including poultry raising, beekeeping, soap making, tailoring, carpet weaving and cheese making. Computer and carpentry training were also carried out in Herat and Kabul, respectively, and these were also small programs. Project ideas continued to lack creativity and seem to have arisen from IOM or local NGOs, not Afghan communities or from OTI advisors.

While the technical courses and income generation training were important for the women who attended, with health education and literacy courses often included as a bonus, the number of women trained is not significant and is unlikely to produce a "ripple effect" of change. However, the projects succeeded on one level – they brought women out of their homes. Training sessions allowed women to be seen beyond the walls of their compound and meet other women several times for a particular purpose acceptable to the local community. Traveling to and from training centers or the homes of other villagers placed women in the public sphere, a domain normally denied to them by local culture. In rural areas, this physical movement and visibility were probably the greatest project outcomes and could have been an explicit objective of OTI-funded activities for women.

During the final phase of operations, running from President Karzai's electoral victory to OTI program close-out (June 2005), relatively few projects included a component targeting women. During this period, eight grants totaling $187,000, including $60,000 for a Provincial Women's Center, constituted slightly more than 5% of total funding. Grants were mostly for small-scale income-generation training.

In sum, OTI had no explicit strategy to focus on women's promotion and did not see this as part of their mission in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, it approved many grants in which there was a good deal of gender focus or mainstreaming. Provincial Women's Centers were a directed activity and would certainly not have been proposed by OTI in the absence of a Congressional earmark. Women's income-generation activities were generally not successful, but they could have been a

more effective part of community participatory activities had they been implemented by specialized NGOs. Many of these had been operating in Peshawar prior to the defeat of the Taliban and could have been sub-contracted on a trial basis beginning in the second half of 2002.

The Bonn Agreement Transition Process

The backdrop against which United States and Coalition foreign policy has played out in Afghanistan was the Bonn Agreement of December 2001, in which key benchmarks had been laid out for the new Afghan government. The key events of the Bonn transitional process were: the first Loya Jirga (Emergency Loya Jirga); the Constitutional Loya Jirga; the presidential election; and parliamentary and provincial elections (to be held in September 2005).

Emergency Loya Jirga (ELJ)

It was, of course, very important that USAID/OTI, the United Nations, and other multilateral or bilateral donor organizations create governmental legitimacy and stability by respecting the general timetable of the Bonn benchmarks. It was quite clear to OTI and other political transition actors and donors in the first months of 2002, that a successful first Loya Jirga was key to the creation of a legitimate government. OTI, indeed, played a major role in ensuring the success of this conclave, and this success is directly related to its fast, flexible, financially supple, organizational culture and mandate. No one else could have played the role that OTI did to save the day, when the United Nations Development Programme found itself bureaucratically unable to deal with the organizational complexities and fast-unfolding timetable faced by Jirga organizers.

OTI provided grants totaling about $3,180,000, of which $3 million were transferred to the UNDP Trust Fund to fund ELJ operations. The remainder funded a special consultant to manage overall assembly logistics and provided funds for Afghan media awareness and production assistance to the media unit covering the event. Managing logistics, however, was far more than just organizing an assembly; thousands of delegates had to be chosen throughout Afghanistan. All in all, this fast-moving response reflects OTI at its tactical best.

Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission

This is another piece of the Bonn Agreement, but it does not appear to have been strategically anticipated by OTI. In answer to a strong appeal from the United Nations, the U.S. State Department transferred $500,000 of Economic Support Funds (ESF) to OTI for rapid turn-around granting to UNDP. The grant was made in April 2003 and ran through June 2004. The project focused on the establishment and institutionalization of an Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and building its capacities in the areas of: complaints and petitions procedures; advisory and institution-building activities; conflict resolution; gender, cultural, linguistic and physical accessibility; human rights networking; and human rights data management.

Constitutional Loya Jirga

The Bonn Accord had specified that a constitution should be written and approved no later than 18 months following the first Loya Jirga. Formal approval of this document occurred in the Constitutional Loya Jirga (CLJ), convened in December 2003. OTI grants focused on the CLJ process totaled about $708,000, although the USAID/Afghanistan Democracy and Governance Office provided another $12 million, of which $5 million were channeled through UNDP.

Half of the OTI grant funds targeting the CLJ were provided for public education on the constitutional process. This was conducted by an Afghan NGO in 302 districts between May and December 2003. Other grants targeted direct assistance to the constitutional drafting committee, provision of media consultants, technical assistance to the constitutional educational process, provincial radio talk shows on the constitutional process, and media training and coverage of the CLJ.

Presidential Election

The presidential election came late in the day for OTI, when its presence had been extended twice and when USAID and other donors were well organized to assist. Grants totaling about $70,000 are focused on media and public relations related to the election.

CHAPTER 2: ROLE OF OTI IN PROMOTING GOVERNMENT LEGITIMACY

This section addresses the degree to which OTI played a successful role in building population confidence and awareness that a new national government existed that provided services and was responsive to citizens. The degree to which OTI contributed to connecting people to their government at the local and national levels is also addressed.

Funding for OTI's Country Objectives

OTI had four over-arching country objectives for the transition towards peace in Afghanistan, although Objective 4 only dealt with activities in FY 2002 and was later removed. One of these was to "increase the Afghan government's capacity and responsiveness." The majority of OTI project funding (66%) was expended to achieve this goal (see Table 1).

Table 1: Summary Report by OTI Country Objectives

Objective	No. of Projects	Total Funding	% of Funding
1. Increase the Afghan government's capacity & responsiveness	556	$30,623,685	65.8%
2. Increase capacity of Afghan media	91	$11,034,867	23.7%
3. Increase citizen awareness of and participation in democratic processes	64	$4,794,855	10.3%
4. Increase capacity of Afghan civil society groups	3	$107,028	0.2%
Total	**714**	**$46,560,435**	**100.0%**

Source: OTI database

OTI aimed to support stability and governmental legitimacy – defined in this report as government accountability with effective application – through improved basic services, such as health, education, communications, water and sanitation, provided by functioning central government ministries.

Increasing Functionality and Capacity of Government Ministries

An early OTI focus that lasted from at least March 2002 to well beyond the establishment of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (TISA) in June 2002 was on preparing ministries to function. Activities included rehabilitating buildings, providing essential office equipment – "Ministry in a Box" – and establishing kindergartens so that women could re-enter the government workforce. The perception of "Ministry in a Box" was that it was highly successful and popular with the Afghan central government and with the U.S. Embassy. The transitional advantage of "Ministry in a Box" was its high visibility and immediate demonstration of U.S. government goodwill. The intent to strengthen the functionality of the central government was therefore politically driven and prioritized to specific ministries: those estimated to provide strong cooperation and outreach, such as the Office of the President, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (cf. Table 2). Of the $30.6 million of funding to increase the Afghan government's capacity and responsiveness, $5,212,478 (17%) was spent on rehabilitating central ministries. This

represented 11% of OTI's total funding. The perception held by both U.S. and Afghan government stakeholders is that the money was well spent. It seems clear that increasing ministerial functionality was a critical, significant, relevant and effective objective for the expenditure of OTI funds.

Table 2: OTI Funding to Central Government (Kabul) Ministries[1]

Ministries	No. of Projects	Total Funding	% of Funding
Irrigation & Safe Environment	3	$43,364	0.7%
Foreign Affairs	2	$41,979	0.8%
Martyrs & Disabled	1	$41,236	0.8%
Mines & Industries	1	$50,374	1.0%
Overseas Afghan Affairs	1	$50,089	1.0%
Commerce	2	$56,223	1.1%
Reconstruction	2	$56,066	1.1%
Refugees & Repatriation	2	$55,103	1.1%
Frontiers & Tribal Affairs	1	$65,500	1.3%
Planning	2	$74,962	1.4%
Water & Power	1	$74,970	1.4%
Higher Education	2	$99,407	1.9%
Agriculture & Livestock	4	$115,064	2.2%
Information & Culture	5	$143,728	2.8%
Public Health	3	$150,409	2.9%
Post & Telecommunications	3	$161,853	3.1%
Justice	4	$166,088	3.2%
Finance	3	$195,769	3.8%
Women's Affairs[2]	7	$202,329	3.9%
Education[3]	5	$288,269	5.5%
Health	3	$437,360	8.4%
Communications[4]	9	$528,003	10.1%
Rural Rehabilitation & Development[5]	14	$841,865	16.1%
Office of the President & Spokesperson	6	$1,272,468	24.4%
Total	**86**	**$5,212,478**	**100.0%**

Notes: 1. The above table does not include funding to provincial ministerial departments (Source: OTI database)
2. Does not include equipment to Provincial Women's Centers (in provinces) or their construction/rehabilitation.
3. Includes $21,622 to the Ministry of Education through Education TV.
4. Includes $13,269 to the Ministry of Communications through Internews.
5. Includes $393,282 in salaries for MRRD advisors.

The Office of the President and the Office of the Spokesperson to the President received the most funding for central government agencies ($1,272,468). Funding supported the position of the Chief of Staff and the President's Spokesperson, training of 20 staff in the Office of the President's Strategic Communications Office (55% of funding), media production skills for its Media Monitoring Unit, and the provision of 250 translation headsets during the inauguration of the country's first democratically elected President. All activities funded were for the promotion of the President and the new government through its internal media and communications office.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs was an early recipient of funding (February 2002) for the renovation of its building compound. The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development

(MRRD) received significant funding, primarily due to its role as the lead agency for TISA and its role in the development of rural programs. MRRD Minister Jalali also had an NGO background with the International Rescue Committee and was trusted by both the U.S. government and the people of Afghanistan. Much of the funding support for MRRD (about 47% of its total funding of $841,865 at the central level) was for the salaries of nine advisors from January through December 2004. While the provision of salaries and capacity building are generally not the function of OTI, with some stakeholders expressing "surprise", others commented on its effectiveness in facilitating and improving the ministry's capabilities and liaisons with its provincial departments.

OTI's goal for the development of good governance was not restricted to central government ministries. Democratic and accountable government also lays the foundation for effective community participation, and it was OTI's aim to connect communities with their local authorities. Hence, once the central government achieved a level of functionality, OTI moved into supporting provincial government projects in parallel to the rehabilitation of central ministries, concluding for the most part by October 2003.

The greatest beneficiaries of provincial government funding were the Departments of Education ($2,021,350, representing a little more than 4% of OTI's total budget) for the rehabilitation of schools and the provision of school-related materials, and the Departments of Women's Affairs with 4% of OTI's total budget ($1,872,528) for the construction of Provincial Women's Centers (PWCs), equipping and furnishing the PWCs, and support for International Women's Day celebrations. The provincial Departments of Rural Rehabilitation and Development received $527,567, predominantly for the rehabilitation of provincial offices.

Quality and Effectiveness of Rehabilitation of Ministries

Early rehabilitation projects were generally of poor quality. The Kabul Court House renovation (RON073) was welcomed by the public as a fine example of the merger of Western and Afghan architecture and construction. As one Afghan said, "Of course I'm happy with it, why not?" However, the inside of the Court House belied the poor quality of its exterior: concrete flaking off the walls, water damage seeping from the ceiling to the floor, and leaks in the plumbing. Old but efficient German locks were replaced with cheap Pakistani ones that neither locked nor opened. Afghans assembled in the area during the evaluation visit expressed pride in the Court House but disappointment in the early signs of structural deterioration soon after rehabilitation: "Construction is difficult, destruction is easy," one said.

Other projects within the Court House included the organization of provincial property documents (IOMOTI003 and RON077). The basement of the Court House was renovated to accommodate photocopied, sorted, labeled and shelved legal documents (e.g. land deeds) all reviewed and accepted by court officials. Fifty years of accumulated dust made the difficult work a health risk. Nevertheless, substantial progress was made, making land deeds and other documents easier to find, and disputes easier to resolve. Officials were pleased that the government had taken action to bring transparency to the land and property transaction system, previously open to corruption. However, work was not yet completed; clutter is stored in disorderly piles or crammed in large polyethylene bags.

The rehabilitation of kindergartens within ministries was, in essence, a link between communities and institutional government. Two kindergartens were visited by the evaluation team in Kabul: one in the Ministry of Agriculture (RON007) and one in the Ministry of Information and Culture (RON010). Both were well used, predominantly by widows, with 95 children in the MoA kindergarten and 70 children in the MoIC kindergarten. Mothers expressed gratitude for a safe and clean place for their children. Their first priority was safety. However, the rehabilitation had been poorly implemented. There was no water at all in the MoA kindergarten, making feeding (boiling of bottles) and washing of cloth diapers difficult. Mothers were expected to visit the kindergarten three times a day to feed their children and take home the soiled diapers. In the MoIC kindergarten, there were no interior door handles (they were never fitted), rainwater was leaking through the ceiling, and there was no running hot water.

The provision and installation of the High Frequency CODAN technology within the Ministry of Communications (RON029 and RON053) from August to December 2002 in 32 provinces was a highly successful project for the establishment of communications network throughout the country. Only the two new provinces, Daikondi and Panjshir created in 2004, did not receive the radio technology. Previous systems took a week to ten days to disseminate information, and recent communications through the Ministry of Defense radio network were for emergency use only. The new technology (telephone, facsimile transmission, email, and the ability to scan documents) now enabled connections between provinces in one to two hours. All government ministries benefited, enabling them to communicate with each other efficiently and effectively for the first time in many years. The communication facilities were also available to the general public on a cost-recovery basis.

Connecting People to their Government at the Local and National Levels

The concept of "connecting" people to their government at the local and national levels was a variable one with differing definitions and perceptions. It was difficult for respondents to define "connection" and more difficult for them to provide evidence of success. An Afghan defined "connecting" as successful when "communities ask for a project, local government authorities approve it, central government rejects it because it isn't a priority, the message is relayed back to the community and the community asks why." This process indicated to Afghans that:

- There was a role for local and national government authorities (as, for example, facilitators, mediators, planners, service providers, approvers and monitors).
- There were priority service needs at the community, provincial and national levels.
- Communication was essential for the design, approval and implementation of a project.
- Communication must be two-way.
- Participatory processes hasten the approval mechanism.

Connecting people through OTI activities can be further defined in terms of the following objectives:

1. Connecting communities through partnerships
    a. Increasing local government's role in social and community development

   b. Facilitating mutual support and self-help initiatives
   c. Promoting community networks, connections and collaborations

2. Building community leadership and capacity
   a. Supporting volunteer recruitment and coordination (free unskilled labor)
   b. Providing work, training, monitoring and participation opportunities
   c. Increasing the capacity of community groups

3. Promoting safe communities
   a. Improving the safety of communities and their facilities to increase access
   b. Promoting safe citizen interactions in public spaces.

Lack of Two-Way Communication

OTI activities predominantly focused on redirecting the community to their local authorities instead of implementing partners to express their needs and submit project proposals. The leader of the men's shura in the volatile district of Panjwai near Kandahar acknowledged the limitations of the central government: "it tends to help bigger villages than ours" (IOMKHD054 to IOMKHD060). He had notified the local government that Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) had been placed on roadways in the region and required removal for people's safety. The local authorities did not respond to the request, so members of the district Panjwai police located the IEDs and took them to the government office. The leader said that the local government took no interest in his village: "it is the international organizations that have brought the people together." Shura members confirmed that they wanted direct and ongoing involvement with their government, but their desire for linkages was not reciprocated.

OTI's strategy of redirecting communities to their local governments was succeeding, but there was generally little or no two-way engagement except on some community infrastructure projects. In community infrastructure projects the community was often involved by providing labor, and the local authorities were involved by providing an inspection and monitoring service, as well as approval of the finished product. Local authorities assisted, in some cases, in the design and planning of community infrastructure projects.

Before the establishment of the new central government in Afghanistan, communities tended to work independently of each other. Thus, some regions required extensive outside influence to link communities with their provincial governments and to the central government, due to past historical conflicts. In some areas, election information or the existence of community infrastructure projects were the catalysts to create provincial and central government dialogue. These types of projects sent a positive indication of change, improvement, community involvement, and government decision-making.

A major problem, however, was linking the central government with the provinces. Central government representatives, such as government ministers and deputy ministers, were often reluctant to visit the provinces. While the provinces were reaching out to the central government, it was rarely two-way: a common complaint in the regions was that the central government was not reaching out to them. OTI, through its implementing partners, imposed specifications that the

central government was required to approve provincial projects, trying to redress the situation. This led to further problems, such as delays in approving or launching projects. Communities indicated strongly that they were disappointed and angry with their ministerial representation.

An example of the reluctance of ministers to visit the provinces was the Women's Affairs Minister and the Department of Women's Affairs Director in Lashkar Gha in Helmand Province near Kandahar. Helmand Province is a high-security region noted for extensive insurgent activity. At the time of the evaluation team visit, "Women's Center" activities were conducted in an interim government building, while the new Provincial Women's Center (PWC)) was undergoing construction. The directress of the newly constructed PWC was not able to receive the keys to open the center, as the Minister and the Department representative had not yet arranged a date for the opening ceremony. This had been delayed due to their reluctance to visit Lashkar Gha. It was felt by the women of the community that if the Minister did not value the PWC in their region, then it would neither have a strong place in the community nor be accepted by community males.

In summary, the connection between people and their government at the local and national levels has been predominantly one-way. Communities were keen to link with their provincial authorities, but representatives at national level were slow in responding to the needs and concerns of regional communities. OTI has been largely unsuccessful in working with government ministries in Kabul to promote regional responsiveness.

Election Awareness Activities

Funding for election processes and awareness totaled $3,423,521 for 11 projects. This represented 1.5% of the total number of projects and about 7% of the total budget. It was generally expressed by stakeholders that election activities were poorly planned but well implemented, fully engaging local authorities and communities. Although election activities were not the usual focus of OTI, they proved to be highly important in terms of impact.

Villages had little difficulty in selecting leaders or elders or in accepting the processes of selection at the district and provincial levels. Some problems occurred between the provincial and central levels in representation to the Emergency Loya Jirga, due to the extent of the project and time pressures. However, when it came to the governmental provision of services to its citizens, the international community had inflated expectations of the newly established government. Most ministries required more than crisis or transitional management; they required skills, financial accountability expertise, money, funding for salaries, and maintenance budgets for public buildings.

Ministries quicker to respond to the needs of their constituents were the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the latter in large part due to the provision of salaries for nine ministerial advisors. Because Finance Minister Ghani had previously worked with the World Bank and MRRD Minister Jalali for the International Rescue Committee, they were both familiar with the "development language" of the international community.

Awareness of the Provision of OTI Services and Raising Expectations

When questioned by the evaluation team, Afghans in communities generally were not aware of who was providing the services or the funding for services. They often answered, "outside foreigners" or "an NGO." In terms of responsibility for local service projects, to Afghans generally there was no differentiation between the contractor, the implementing partner, OTI, the U.S. government, or the Afghan government.

Where there was differentiation, Afghans expressed the concern that the central government was raising the expectations of its citizens but was not able to fulfill them. This is a particularly critical issue in post-conflict environments where governments underestimate the amount of rehabilitation required for the community to "see visible" progress. One Afghan said: "people may get to think that the government is the main provider, but the government doesn't get to their people and the gap between the government and the community is widening. The government people are working in their ministries and are not going to the regions."

There are also mixed views about the value of NGOs by Afghans. Some view them as an impediment for the central government in getting to village communities because, if NGOs are there, then the perception by ministries is that the community is being assisted and therefore does not require their services. Afghans also expressed the view that central government ministries use this as an excuse not to visit regional areas.

There was also the perception that NGOs received money that could have gone directly to communities or ministries. One Afghan said of the central government expenditure of development funds: "nine percent of the money goes to NGOs, 47% goes to the UN, 24% goes to the government, 19% goes to contractors, and I don't know where the other one percent goes". He further stated that the working relationships between the government and the UN and NGOs were weak and that USAID's Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) took too long to expand into the regions (taking six months). He maintained that strong and sustained advocacy was required on why the international community was in the country: "people need to understand who they are and why they are here to help us and the government needs to work with them to ensure that work is successful and money is not wasted. And some government staff shouldn't let NGOs do all the work. It's a strange relationship that I can't understand. I don't know sometimes who is doing the work."

Impact on Women of OTI's Promotion of Government Legitimacy

The gains made by Afghan women in the 1960s and 1970s were lost in the years of political upheaval and war. While women remained active throughout much of the war in university administrations, government service including the health and education fields, and the military, each year of warfare brought new challenges. When the Taliban took Kabul in 1996, it was ostensibly to bring peace and provide security for women who had suffered increasing victimization. However, the Taliban proved to be the worst violators of Afghan women's rights.

President's Karzai's interim administration was not elected or even selected by a wide segment of the population, but Afghans were ready for a change and the majority of the population

accepted the new administration or at least the peace it brought. However, the Afghan government had no funds of its own and its ability to raise taxes was limited. The new administration, therefore, was entirely dependent upon the international community to fund the political process laid out at Bonn that was supposed to lead to a legitimate national government in two and a half years.

National Political Process

OTI did not commit itself initially to a high level of support for Afghanistan's national political transition process, since these activities fell under U.N. auspices. However, when the U.N. realized it would be unable to ensure smooth running of the June 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga, it asked the U.S. government to provide logistical and financial assistance. The U.S. government responded through OTI.

This support to Afghan's first political milestone proved critical for Afghanistan's domestic and international credibility. OTI grants in support of the Emergency Loya Jirga (ELJ) totaled $3.18 million. The funding and related programming were important not only in financial terms, but also for ensuring that this first major political event of the new Afghanistan ran smoothly. The ELJ included 160 women[34] among its 1,500 delegates, a significant gain for women who had been excluded from the political process under the Taliban administration. The ELJ was the first national political development in years that took place in the capital with the support and attention of nearly all Afghans, many who watched and listened to proceedings with hope and pride. The success of the complicated logistical and security arrangements the ELJ required were a direct result of the OTI mechanism that allowed people to be hired quickly and funds to be transferred rapidly.

The Emergency Loya Jirga was the model for the Constitutional Loya Jirga of December 2003. By this time, however, the U.N. was better able to manage logistical arrangements for this event. OTI grants in support of the constitutional process were significantly less than those for the ELJ and totaled about $694,000. Grants went mainly to support focus groups organized by civil society organizations such as the Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF) and media groups such as the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) that trained journalists to report on the constitutional drafting process and the Constitutional Loya Jirga event. These OTI-funded grants impacted Afghans' understanding of the constitution-writing process at a national level and were able to reach men and women, although not equally. An evaluation of ACSF's outreach programs highlights challenges and successes and includes a section detailing women's training on the constitution.[35] There were many lessons learned, including that it was possible, though not necessarily easy, to reach women in remote areas, and for these women to understand the basic constitutional and rights issues under discussion. Moreover, the educated women conducting the training learned much about rural Afghanistan and rural women, loosely knitting urban and rural women together as they began to discover and demand their newfound rights as Afghan women.

[34] Approximately 20 female delegates were elected from the provinces and another 140 were appointed since it was difficult to find women who could run as delegates for the Emergency Loya Jirga.

[35] Azarbaijani-Moghaddem, Sippi, "Technical Lessons Learned from the Afghan Civil Society Forum. ACSF/Swisspeace Civic Education for the Constitution Process," 2003.

Additional OTI-funded training on the constitution was *ad hoc* and supported outreach to religious leaders, village elders and women in Baghlan, Bamian, Kapisa and Paktia provinces. Such training was not systematic and reached only a handful of communities where NGOs worked or could work. The approach was not strategic, nor did it target specific communities identified as those of greatest need. Paktia was a province in which training could be described as a critical need, but outreach was done because AWEC could work there, not because the community was on a "critical" list (that, in fact, did not exist).

OTI provided even fewer grants in support of activities for the October 2004 presidential election; although some of the earlier training on the constitutional process conducted by civil society organizations such as the ACSF were directly relevant. According to OTI, a decision was taken to support the election by relying on media funds and media activities. This was made all the more necessary because funds for small grants through IOM/ATI were limited in the run-up to elections and a fully staffed and operational USAID Mission Democracy and Governance Office already had four election support agreements in place. Media reporting on all aspects of elections, such as preparations, election day, and ballot counting, was important and in high demand by Afghans and the international community. In this way, the media structure funded by OTI continued to provide awareness and serve the political transition process.

At a national level, therefore, OTI-funded grants enhanced the legitimacy of the government to the degree to which it funded programs. Women may not have benefited equally from the process, since they are less literate and less politically powerful. Nevertheless, women appear to have benefited overall. They took part in the Emergency and Constitutional Loya Jirgas, participated in trainings, and voted in the presidential election. Some behind-the-scenes political machinations marred these events in the eyes of some Afghans, especially women, but the flaws do not belong to OTI.

Sub-national Administration

While OTI support at the national level for the overall political process was effective for establishing the legitimacy of the fledgling Afghan administration, the record is mixed in regard to linkages between national and sub-national levels of government and communities. There are several reasons for this. First, the Afghan civil service is bloated. A civil service reform program has begun, which turned the attention of civil servants from government work to securing their positions. Second, with an average monthly wage of forty dollars, civil servants feel that it is not their responsibility to monitor projects implemented by NGOs, international organizations and contract employees, who are paid at least ten times more. Additionally, some civil servants are new to government employment or in new ministries, the most relevant example being the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). Since the role of the MoWA remains unclear, however, some staff members are not interested in expanding their workload and level of responsibility, since they see the additional burden as having no personal benefit.

The two ministries most involved in projects in which girls and women were beneficiaries of OTI grants were the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Women's Affairs. While the June 2002 document outlining funding criteria for OTI-supported projects did not specify that government officials had to be involved in projects, it is clear from 2002 strategy documents (March, April, July 2002) that OTI expected governmental officials, particularly at the local

levels, to be officially and physically involved in community-level projects. However, OTI basically left the methods of including government officials up to its implementing partners and their NGO and private sector sub-contractors. This inclusion slowed down project approvals and the overall OTI small grant "burn rate," leaving implementing partners and their grantee contractors inexorably sacrificing some measure of governmental-community connection (the "process") for monies expended and small projects completed.

Ministry of Education: School Rehabilitation

With OTI funding, more than 40 schools were constructed or rehabilitated. The Ministry of Education was the lead government ministry in these projects, although the Ministry of Reconstruction and Rural Development and Ministry of Planning were also sometimes involved. Government involvement and effectiveness in project implementation was mixed. In a typical example, involvement of the Ministry of Education in the construction of the Qarchaqui School in Badghis (IOMHRT023) led to increased visibility and credibility for the ministry, according to project documentation. There were delays in completion of the school due to the onset of winter and some lack of capacity with the contractor, but during this time the MoE met with the community and the school board to discuss construction issues and provide updates and information. In doing so, the Ministry highlighted its role and established credibility.

Rehabilitation of the Sultan Razia school in Mazar-e Sharif followed a different track (IOMMZR010). The initial OTI-funded work to repair the school following Taliban occupation and bombing by Coalition Forces was unsatisfactory. OTI provided additional funding and a two-month timeframe to carry out further repairs to this important facility that offers classes for 6,000 girls in two shifts. Work was still ongoing during the May 2005 evaluation team site visit, but the school also had other problems. Nearly half of the teachers were not in attendance, with low pay cited as justification for their absence. The Ministry of Education was responsible for ensuring teacher attendance, securing desks and chairs for the school, and monitoring school rehabilitation, but there appeared to be weaknesses in overall facilities management.

Even if the school is eventually repaired satisfactorily, managerial weaknesses impact students' and parents' view of the Ministry of Education and by extension the overall competency and ultimate legitimacy of the central government. Low pay, managerial weakness, and poor quality furnishings are not limited to this school and not an issue OTI can resolve, but they affect project outcomes and the government's ability to gain legitimacy through OTI-financed projects.

Another issue affecting government legitimacy included the selection of schools to be rehabilitated, since schools selected for work were those visited by the Ministry, not necessarily those most in need of renovation. Ministry of Education officials were unable or unwilling to travel to remote areas and concentrated their efforts on areas easiest to reach. Moreover, despite the relative ease of reaching the facilities that were rehabilitated, the work on many was unsatisfactory. A list of 34 projects that were reopened by OTI and allocated additional funds for additional rehabilitation work included 14 schools and training centers (40%).

MoWA and Income Generation

With the Ministry of Women's Affairs, government engagement with OTI-funded projects has usually revolved around income-generation training – some that targeted poor and vulnerable women – and the construction of Provincial Women's Centers (PWCs) that directly benefit MoWA staff. Income-generation projects included sewing, carpet weaving, preserves making and beekeeping. Communities were sometimes reluctant to participate in such projects, since NGOs were normally contracted to conduct income-generation training before communities had been consulted about such training and understood its purpose. NGOs, rather than responding to community requests, generally had to motivate communities to participate. A project in Badakhshan was one such example. The implementing NGO, Education and Aid Center (EAC), had to address the reluctance of a community to participate in a beekeeping and honey making project. According to documentation, to gain project support EAC had to speak with men and women in the local community and involve the provincial Department of Women's Affairs (DoWA). The community finally agreed to the project, and it reportedly went well, yielding additional benefits of good government relations with the community and male support to this women's project. This and related projects might have gone more smoothly, however, had such consultations formed a part of project design, not project implementation.

In Paktia province, a project implemented by the Afghan Women's Education Center (AWEC) began in a similar manner, with an NGO prepared to work but with an uncertain "beneficiary" community response. The head of AWEC met with the male shura, which listened to her and offered its trust and permission to conduct income generation and peace training for women. In the eight months of training that followed, women and men in six villages attended workshops on rights, including women's rights, elections and peace. Some 120 women also received training in candle making, tailoring, and embroidery, although the focus of AWEC's involvement was peace training. The initiative was so successful that it was repeated in other districts in Paktia[36] and, to everyone's surprise, the percentage of women registered to vote in Paktia exceeded that of men by two percent.

The development of a relationship between AWEC activities and Paktia's provincial DoWA director proved more problematic. AWEC invited the director to attend the peace workshops and she attended one, but declined subsequent invitations. It appears the director was organizing her own OTI-funded trainings; tailoring, and jam and preserves-making projects and did not want competition from other woman-headed NGOs operating in "her" territory. She consequently had little interest in supporting AWEC activities for women.[37] While the director's attitude was not a reflection of MoWA policy, her behavior affected government–community relations and legitimacy. The quick-impact approach employed by OTI and IOM in funding community projects to raise governmental visibility and legitimacy can thus have its counter-productive effects.

[36] Some of the project's success can be attributed to the fact that many in Paktia lived in Pakistan as refugees. Pakistan exposed some rural Afghans to new amenities such as electricity and facilities such as schools and clinics.
[37] Afghan Women's Educational Center, "Women's Community Participation, Awareness Raising and Support," September 8, 2004.

MoWA: Provincial Women's Centers

Personality issues have also affected the completion of 14 Provincial Women's Centers (PWCs)[38] that are linked to the Ministry of Women's Affairs. U.S. government funding of $2.5 million for these centers was committed in January 2003, but by June 2005 only a handful of centers were at or near completion. Their functions also remained unclear. Provincial MoWA staff members primarily see the new centers as office space, while OTI envisions them as training and support centers for provincial women.

The evaluation team visited PWCs in Helmand, Paktia and Parwan. Directors of the centers in Paktia and Parwan discussed the physical structure and furnishings of the PWCs more than the types of training programs they hoped to offer. Moreover, since the MoWA – a new ministry – did not own land in provincial capitals, land acquired for PWCs tends to be on the outskirts of these towns. The PWC in Helmand, still being completed, is one such example. The semi-remote location worried the director who expressed concern about how trainers and women would reach the center, since there is currently no bus service.[39] The center she runs now is in a rented building near the center of town. She has asked representatives from the MoWA in Kabul to visit Helmand, see the programs she runs, and officially open the new center, but as of May 2005, her requests had been ignored.

It is unclear how these centers will affect government legitimacy. Those that are well run and able to provide services will obviously bring legitimacy. The majority of rural women will have difficulty accessing these centers, however, since women's freedom of movement remains limited. To reach rural women, the MoWA will have to conduct outreach from provincial capitals into rural areas, though this will not be easy. It is difficult to staff some offices and, even when staffed, many MoWA and provincial DoWA women are reluctant to travel. Provincial staff reports that they have received few visits from Kabul-based staff, even though such visits have been requested. UNIFEM, the U.N. agency supporting programs benefiting women, has played a role in building the capacity of the MoWA since its creation, but that has not been enough to ensure a functioning ministry and provide outreach to women province-wide. Of course, the ministry needs time to develop, understand its role, and become effective, but that is a long-term goal not achieved through infrastructure alone. To quote a member of the Ahmadabad (Paktia) women's shura, "We need education and freedom. We don't need buildings."

IOM, as implementing partner, tried to foster government-community relations in some projects by asking ministry staff to accompany them on project monitoring visits. Sometimes securing ministry participation was as simple as sending a car to pick up an official. At other times, a nominal per diem was required, since officials felt that those making more money – the international organization and NGO staff – were responsible for monitoring work and did not see their role in the project. The ministry contribution often consisted largely of complaints about work being done and focused on minor issues, such as paint color.

[38] Three additional centers were constructed with USAID, not USAID/OTI, funding. They are not considered in this report.

[39] It is expected that a civic center will be built in the same area as the PWC and such a facility will attract public transportation, but the center's completion date is still unknown.

In sum, government legitimacy at the sub-national level, as a result of an OTI-funded project: differed from project to project; was sometimes affected by issues beyond the control of the community, OTI or the implementing partner; was personality driven. IOM also had different capacities, female staffing and security concerns in each of its sub-offices, affecting the development of relationships. There was also high turnover of international IOM staff, although the Afghan IOM staff remained relatively constant.

Media

Media projects impacted government legitimacy and women's lives. Each time the media pushed the social agenda, often with respect to women's issues, the government response was awaited, since its response would signal continued support for or curtailment of women's rights. An important example occurred in January 2003 when State-run Kabul Radio and Television played a 1970s video of female singer Salma. Members of Afghanistan's Supreme Court objected to the broadcast, stating that women should not be seen singing and dancing on television. Kabul Radio and Television, with the support of the Karzai administration, ignored the protests and continued playing such videos, saying that the new constitution guaranteed the equality of men and women, making women's appearance on television legal.

While the video of Salma was not related to an OTI project, the discussion surrounding its broadcast impacted OTI-funded projects, notably independent and community radio stations, especially those with female broadcasters and presenters. AINA, Arman FM, Tolo TV, and the Internews network of independent radio stations all benefited from the liberalization of the media and the government's support of women on radio and television. Though the geographic areas in which women are able to be heard on the air are limited, the fact that their legal status was upheld was a victory for women and the wealth of media projects OTI funded in support of women's programming and pushing the social agenda.

Programming on OTI-funded independent stations impacts the legitimacy of the government, because programs considered controversial are debated and the government must take a position. While the Afghan government has not always stood on the side of a free and independent media, it has not interfered with programming on OTI-funded media outlets. This means that even though male and female DJs and presenters are on the air together at Arman FM and Tolo TV (projects receiving 5% of all OTI grants) and some of their programming is considered controversial, the broadcasts are still permitted and the government has not moved to ban them. To date, this has represented important gains for women and demonstrated government commitment to women's rights and development.

CHAPTER 3: OTI USE OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES IN COMMUNITIES

This section addresses the degree to which OTI employed participatory processes – such as building consensus on priority needs – in program communities to increase citizen connections to each other and to local authorities. If they were not used, the question is why not. If participatory processes were used, the issue is whether they contributed to increased and continued discussion among citizens.

OTI's Role in Afghanistan

The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) promotes itself as USAID's critical response team: fast, flexible, and catalytic. It is neither a relief funding agency, nor a humanitarian funding agency, nor a recovery program; it is not focused on developmental aid nor is it focused on sustainability; and it is not a capacity building funding body. OTI is a transitional program – the bridge between humanitarian aid and developmental aid. It has been said that OTI "raises the flag" immediately. However, its major strength for transition is that it is the most effective and convenient funding mechanism in the entire U.S. government due to its flexibility and "not-withstanding authority"[40] to bypass bureaucracy which enables swift decisions and swifter implementation. In actual fact, OTI very rarely resorts to its "not-withstanding authority," relying on other means to move quickly and flexibly.

OTI's example of providing funding for quick-impact transitional projects was adopted by The Asia Foundation, because it realized its effectiveness in emergency situations. Many U.S government and NGO stakeholders, therefore, expressed strong appreciation of OTI staff and their "can do" attitude and efficient problem-solving approach to a wide range of project proposals.

In terms of project sub-grants, however, the evaluation team often found it difficult to find clear patterns in what OTI did. OTI staff assumed that its disparate grants would come together and form an aggregate whole by the completion of their efforts in-country. This was particularly the case at the community level. One interested party said of the OTI grants and their lack of "composite impact," that they were "tiny little carrots that can be thrown away; they are not big carrots."

The lack of composite or patterned activity is particularly noticeable in OTI's objective of community participation and engagement. The perception by U.S. government and other donor stakeholders was that OTI's main objective was to "get projects done." Other perceptions were that OTI created hope, intensified the involvement of the Afghan government, and lastly attempted to involve communities. Yet other respondents had the perception that, due largely to pressures from Washington D.C. to implement specific projects, OTI had the following priorities in order of importance: U.S. government priorities; Afghan government priorities; and community priorities.

[40] Transition Inititiative (TI) funds can be used by OTI "notwithstanding any other provision of the law."

In the final analysis, it appeared to many U.S. government, donor, and NGO observers that there was no solid evidence that OTI-funded community initiatives added to democratic and political change in Afghanistan. Anecdotal evidence was that OTI "missed the mark" with community engagement since: "the community wasn't always consulted; often not all of the community was consulted; or the community didn't always get what they wanted or thought they wanted."

The strong perception by many Afghan and non-Afghan stakeholders was that OTI was not successful or effective at implementing community participation processes. As one informant stated, "if you monitor projects, you get projects; if you monitor community participation, you get community participation. I can't say I saw infrastructure projects with community participation."

Community Initiatives

Funding for community initiatives totaled $17,955,483 for 406 projects, equal to about 39% of the total budget and 57% of the total number of grants. Community initiatives funding comprised: $15,542,317 for 328 community infrastructure projects; $540,678 for 24 income-generation projects; and $1,872,488 for 54 other community-based activities (see Table 3). Quick-impact community infrastructure grants included the rehabilitation of schools, ministries, pipelines, floodways and culverts; income-generation grants included projects such as jam making, carpet weaving and poultry breeding; and other community-based activities included business development training, literacy courses, and the provision of toys for kindergartens.

Table 3: Summary of Funding for Community Initiatives

Community Initiatives	No. of Projects	Total Funding	% of CI Funding	% of Total OTI Funding
Community infrastructure	328	$15,542,317	86.6%	33.4%
Other (community-based) activities	54	$1,872,488	10.4%	4.0%
Income-generation activities	24	$540,678	3.0%	1.2%
Total	**406**	**$17,955,483**	**100%**	**38.6%**

Source: OTI database

Community infrastructure projects such as school rehabilitation, bridges, water pumps, and dams were the main focus in the early period due to their visibility; little was achieved in community relations, or at best it was fragmented. Respondents generally felt that OTI recognized in some cases that community involvement in infrastructure projects was occurring and thus attempted to build upon it, but such involvement was not originally designed and created by OTI, making it "fortuitously accidental" rather than strategic when it happened. However, the attention OTI paid to community involvement in early strategy statements (March, April, July 2002) indicates that OTI was concerned with this issue from the beginning, but largely failed to appreciate the complexities of working in rural Afghan communities.

Participatory Processes: Definition

In its provision of community initiatives funding, OTI specified that funding was provided for projects less than six months' duration and that the activity proposed should be one that the

community clearly could not undertake themselves. There was also a requirement for activities to link communities with each other and with their local authorities. Whether it was a community infrastructure activity or other community-based activity, these linkages were to be brought about primarily through "participatory processes."

Participatory processes, through consensus decision making, may be defined as gaining general agreement. The basic aim is for a group of generally like-minded people to reach a common decision without alienating anyone. The basic procedure in consensus decision-making is that various options are canvassed and discussed. In many cases, the procedure works remarkably well. Those with divergent views generally see that they are taken seriously, and this builds the cohesion of the group. An important difference between consensus and ordinary meeting procedures is the role of leadership. The consensus approach has no formal leader but uses facilitators to assist the group to participate, discuss, and decide on major issues. The facilitators are crucial to the success of consensus; they are supposed to test for consensus, encourage less articulate group members to participate, offer suggestions for procedure, and summarize views expressed. Consensus, then, is a method of decision making without voting that aims for participation and group cohesion and openness to new ideas.

OTI's community participation model and participatory processes were not clearly articulated, documented or identified, and the perception by many NGO and community-level stakeholders was that they were, in any case, not implemented effectively.

One example of a model community participation project was the conversion of 20 water mills into micro-hydropower plants in five provinces, particularly in Parwan, to supply essential electricity to villages near Kabul (IOMKBL185). Communities contributed materials, such as electric cables, wires and wooden poles, as well as skilled and unskilled labor. During the implementation of the project, villagers interacted with the implementing partner and the local government through Village Electricity Boards established in each of the five provinces by the communities to manage their electricity needs. The Village Electricity Boards not only empowered the community with ownership of the project, but they also increased, monitored and sustained the number of communities having direct contact with provincial and district governments. Electricity, through television, opens up these communities to the news of political and economic developments in Afghanistan and the world. Sustainable electricity thus gives the central government visibility and credibility. In consequence, this project should be highlighted as a type of project critical to OTI's aims and objectives and one which should be replicated in future for its strong impact on the community, forging of community and government links, promotion of the central government's provision of services, and provision of access to the media.

Comparison with the World Bank Community-based National Solidarity Program

NGO and community-level stakeholders expressed doubt that OTI had contributed to improved community and local government relations and whether any existing linkages would be sustained to form permanent relationships. Clearly, the general perception is that OTI was not successful in implementing or promoting community participatory processes. Observers therefore questioned whether OTI should have continued to conduct community-based activities or whether programs

such as the World Bank's National Solidarity Program (NSP) should have become the major funding forum for community grants.

NSP is a $186 million joint donor and government mission that commenced in 2002 to provide a national community development program targeted to reach all 20,000 estimated village communities in Afghanistan by the fourth year of implementation. The joint donor review of April-May 2005 indicated that the NSP had reached some 8,268 villages by the end of March 2005 in cooperation with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. Of those villages 7,348 had an elected Community Development Council (CDC). Fine-tuning its approach, in February 2005 the NSP began to establish women's CDCs in addition to men's to facilitate women's decision making and activity ownership.

The success of the NSP lies in its demonstrated ability to launch a large-scale program across Afghanistan, including in remote regions, despite a volatile security situation. OTI's advantage over the NSP was OTI's greater flexibility in its funding mechanism to respond quickly to the needs of communities. OTI was already in country in April 2002 when the NSP was launched, but whose future success was unknown. This should have spurred OTI to even greater community investment. However, once the NSP began to prove the value of its community development model, OTI could have left the work of community organization and quality-of-life, infrastructure projects to the NSP and shifted gears into another – more qualitative – level of community involvement, even working in NSP communities. Shifting into such a phase was even recommended by OTI advisors in mid-2002, although no mention was made of coordination with the NSP (cf. Chapter 1 on OTI strategy).

It should be noted, however, that the NSP was very slow to take form, only getting under way substantially in late 2003. During this time OTI, IOM, and USAID as a whole were engaged in extensive discussions with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development to ensure complementarity of efforts. In retrospect, the decision to remain heavily invested in community infrastructure appears justified, at least through 2003.

The evaluation team visited some remote and volatile communities where OTI had community infrastructure projects, such as the community of Panjwai near Kandahar (IOMKHD057), and in which there was no National Solidarity Program. The leader of the men's shura strongly expressed his gratitude towards the evaluation team for overcoming adversity and security risks to visit his village: "our own government people don't come here because they are scared and they don't want to help us." OTI had succeeded in reaching this community, but while there were strong community links with the implementing partner (IOM) in its Kandahar office, there was no participation and engagement with local authorities, the central government, or OTI staff. It should be noted that OTI staff were not allowed out to these areas in the last year of the program for reasons that had nothing to do with choice. For security reasons, the U.S. military placed these areas off-limits to U.S. government personnel. This is a good example of one of the "external constraints" that hampered OTI supervision of its program activities.

Quality and Effectiveness of OTI Community Infrastructure Projects

OTI has lacked the means to monitor performance of its community-level projects due to security concerns, restricted movement, lack of female staff within implementing partners who could travel to the regions, lack of staff with technical expertise (such as engineering), and emphasis on rapid implementation, especially in the first two years. Hence, the quality of infrastructure projects has often been poor, with defects showing only a few months after project completion. In addition, a lack of emphasis on sustainability of infrastructure often led to poor quality projects and the perception from the communities affected and NGO stakeholders that money was wasted. Observers feel that OTI's emphasis was predominantly on "metrics," that is, reporting on the number of completed projects, rather than on quality infrastructure to support a transitional state. It was also felt that, while sustainability was not OTI's goal, the lack of sustainable infrastructure and projects may have negated their over-arching goals and damaged the reputation of the American government.

The emphasis on rapid "bricks and mortar" constructions to ensure high visibility (and accountability to the American government) often led to missed opportunities in consensus building and participatory processes to increase and strengthen community connections to each other and government authorities. OTI's focus on community infrastructure, while important initially, was undertaken for far too long. Respondents felt that community infrastructure projects could have been undertaken until about June 2003 and then funds should have been redirected to other community initiatives, such as income-generation, peace-building activities, and other innovative projects. Since OTI originally planned to phase-out in September 2003, this probably meant that the debate for a post-infrastructure stage was seen as unnecessary. When the OTI program was first extended to September, 2004, a shift in strategy should have been reconsidered. However, there is no evidence that such a discussion occurred.

Since quantity of projects (metrics) was generally seen as the measure of success by OTI and the American government, rather than quality and the impact of projects on recipient communities, this inevitably increased the chances of poor quality construction. Although a number of quality problems were noted in construction grants, the Omara Khan School in the Wasil Abad Village of Kabul (IOMKBL030) provides an extreme example of poor quality, delays, and over-expenditure on a single community infrastructure project. As construction proceeded, IOM and OTI staff recommended that construction of the planned third story should be held up until problems with unsatisfactory concrete strength were rectified. Construction was still not complete by May 2005, although the project had begun in November 2002 with a ten-month deadline. Almost 3,000 girls and boys in the region were studying in private houses nearby, while awaiting the completion of their new school. The current over-expenditure was $224,462, bringing the total projected cost to more than $475,000. Less than encouraging, the evaluation team witnessed the continued mixing of cement on the ground by hand. An Afghan worker, moreover, revealed that he had never been trained in brick-making or brick-laying.

Community Income-generation Projects

Income-generation projects are also subject to problems of other types. The Herat Women's Market Garden project (IOMHRT035) brought women and local authorities together but failed to

generate income. Local authorities in Urdu Khan worked together and women interacted with government representatives and each other to cultivate a garden site. The Department of Agriculture provided land at no cost; the Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development contributed a livestock trainer, provided training, and monitored the project for three months; the Department of Planning provided authorization; the Department of Women's Affairs cooperated in identifying the project site and project monitoring; and the local men's shura approved the project after some initial dissatisfaction with the women leaving their homes. The project design included an outlet for the sale of produce. Permission for the outlet was not granted by the women's husbands and men of the village, particularly local mullahs. Males were then responsible for taking the produce to market, but they kept a large proportion of the money for themselves.

Similarly, in the Zurmat district of Gardez, women undertaking the Food Preservation and Marketing Training activity (IOMGDZ069) expressed satisfaction with the course, since it brought women from different villages together for the first time. However, the instructor (from nearby Kabul) took most of the jam and he women were disappointed with this betrayal. The jam making activity never proceeded to market.

The implementing partner was unable to solve these problems – minor in detail but major in terms of impact on income-generation and confidence building of the community – due to the lack of female staff and inadequate monitoring to mitigate problems. Consequently, the partner did not follow up on concerns. While income-generation projects funded by OTI often left the participants feeling "short changed," implementing partners often used the "captive audience approach" during these community projects to include literacy lessons or election information. Literacy lessons were usually conducted by a literate member of the community and the achievement sought for participants was the ability to write their own name and count money (by numbers and not color).

Twenty-four income-generation projects were funded for a total of $540,678, representing 3% of community initiative projects and about 1% of the total OTI budget. It would not have taken a great deal of money or expertise to transform these income-generation projects into successes, not only in terms of bringing participants together but in actually generating new income for families. However, unspecialized NGOs should never be entrusted to carry out these projects, whose failure to generate and maintain income is certainly counter-productive to the promotion of participatory development processes.

Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Projects

OTI's peace-building and conflict-resolution activities proved highly successful in terms of participatory processes, consensus building, confidence building, improved mediation, and changing attitudes. Peace-building workshops were conducted by the local Afghan NGO, Sanayee Development Foundation (SDF) and through international implementing partners IOM and Ronco (IOMOTI002, RON060-074-079-088). While there was no community participation in the design of the program, the implementing partners worked with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Religious Affairs to identify provincial and community leaders to attend peace-building workshops of a week's duration. Previously, warring communities would have resolved

issues of conflict, such as water rights and land or marriage disputes (including domestic violence) by the use of violence, or at best, by bribing the local courts. After peace-building workshops, effective methods of mediation were implemented. For example, in Farah Province, where the workshop participants were provincial leaders, they subsequently resolved 11 out of 14 cases through mediation.

In this program, provincial leaders developed an action plan for peace building in their communities. Peace Committees were formed voluntarily to support peace activities such as:

- Dissemination of information through mosques and journalists.
- Formulation of sub-committees in government departments and local communities.
- Production of publications to support peace building.
- The transfer of knowledge and methods for conflict resolution.

The Peace Committees resulted in changed attitudes and behaviors, whereby prejudices against specific groups were reduced. They provided the opportunity to speak freely about conflicts in the community and the development of mutual solutions. Due to lack of follow-up and monitoring of funding, project activities are now only operational in two of the 15 provinces where workshops were held: Herat and Ghazni. The workshops, therefore, were a good "first step" in conflict resolution and further mediation skills are required by communities within the existing regions, as well as in other regions. Sanayee Development Foundation submitted a proposal to OTI in July 2004 for an additional one-year program, but no response was received. While OTI has no record of receiving this proposal, OTI had already made the decision that SDF was already funded to near capacity through grants from the EU, CIDA, and the Dutch government.

Funding for peace-building activities totaled $121,625 for five projects, which represented 0.7% of the total number of grants and 0.3% of the total budget. In comparison, $1,600,490 was allocated as "Support to USAID" in OTI database terminology. This represented 14 grants (excluding funding for four projects for polls/surveys) and expended over 3% of OTI's total budget. USAID support activities included funding the positions of a gender and other sectoral experts, the production of project signs for the Provincial Women's Centers, and BBC monitoring. Funding for 24 grants for polls and surveys totaled $2,390,200, representing about 5% of OTI's total budget. Projects largely outside the scope of OTI objectives were thus funded, considerably limiting "grass-roots" peace-building efforts.

"Reaching out" to Communities in All Provinces

There was mixed perception from U.S. government and NGO stakeholders as to whether OTI "reached out" to all provinces and regions. From mid-2002, OTI expanded its reach beyond Kabul to the regions, with emphasis on the Pashtun areas of the east, south, and south-east coming later. When OTI extended into the regions, project monitoring became difficult due to security concerns, distance, staff turnover, insufficient staff, the time-consuming nature of documentation, and staff with limited or no technical skills to conduct effective monitoring.

The Leahy Initiative funding through OTI was a highly effective method for "reaching out" to remote communities. They were able to work across 18 districts, in six provinces, in the south-east of Afghanistan. Designed to provide compensatory activities (small reconstruction projects and public outreach) to communities adversely affected by U.S. military operations, such as errant bombing, it was recognized as an effective process to assist innocent communities, mitigate the influence of opponents to the transitional government, and affirm the legitimacy of the new government. While the security risks in the most dangerous regions were high, leading to cancellation or delay of some projects, this outreach assisted communities where NGOs were initially not operational and subsequently opened up the regions to humanitarian and aid agencies.

The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) have been another mechanism (not part of OTI activities) for "reaching out" to remote communities. From December 2002, they were deployed throughout Afghanistan to strengthen the reach of U.S. government activities and enhance the legitimacy of the central government in remote regions. PRTs are joint civil-military units that work through improving security and facilitating reconstruction efforts. Activities focus on maintaining working relationships with key government, tribal, military, religious, NGO and UN leaders in the provinces, as well as providing security support for activities, such as election registration, through non-violent means.

The existence of a PRT network provided OTI with a handy mechanism to inspect community projects implemented by its primary partner IOM. Thus, the OTI field program officer traveled extensively between PRTs (or their predecessors) from mid-2002 to late 2003. Since then, monitoring of USAID activities in PRT areas is primarily done by non-OTI USAID staff attached to PRTs. While these USAID employees are responsible for all USAID projects in their zones, this certainly provides better coverage in PRT areas than occasional and rotating coverage provided from Kabul. The PRT USAID staff members know their zones and are well positioned to follow-up on political transition and community engagement issues. In areas without PRTs, OTI has resorted to hiring Afghan NGOs to carry out the monitoring function. The primary case in point is the NGO Afghans for Afghans working in northeastern Afghanistan.

Table 4 outlines OTI funding for each of the 32 provinces. Two provinces were created in 2004: Daikondi and Panjshir. OTI funded eight small grants in Panjshir and four in Daikondi, but these have been included under the count for Kabul and Bamiyan provinces. These grants were approved specifically to support the new governors assigned to these new provinces. OTI states that for political transitional reasons, it decided to go into Panjshir before any other donor would dare do so. To carry this out, OTI made special logistics arrangements with the U.S. military. One grant proposed for Panjshir was cancelled, however (IOMKBL182). The repair of a canal in three villages (Zardi, Plat-Kham, and Deh-badqoul) in Panjshir was initially delayed due to community and government requests for changes to specifications. Many meetings were held, but no consensus was reached. The approach of winter would have further delayed the project, and so it was cancelled.

The grant amount indicated by OTI for Nimroz province was $195,905. However, during the evaluation team's visit to the Kandahar regional IOM office, it was noted that this funding would

not be spent due to security concerns in the province. Other provinces may have been affected by similar security issues.

Table 4: OTI Funding by Province[1]

Province	Total Funding	% of Funding	Funding (excluding media grants)	% of Funding for Media Grants
Kunar	$156,850	0.3%	$156,850	0.0%
Nimroz	$195,905	0.3%	$195,905	0.0%
Zabul	$259,378	0.4%	$259,378	0.0%
Nuristan	$268,060	0.4%	$268,060	0.0%
Sari Pul	$269,509	0.4%	$269,509	0.0%
Laghman	$285,971	0.5%	$285,971	0.0%
Kapisa	$367,430	0.6%	$367,430	0.0%
Farah	$382,212	0.6%	$382,212	0.0%
Ghor	$399,893	0.6%	$183,488	54.1%
Jawzjan	$407,982	0.6%	$407,982	0.0%
Takhar	$408,822	0.6%	$408,822	0.0%
Helmand	$486,237	0.8%	$322,851	33.6%
Samangan	$544,580	0.9%	$544,580	0.0%
Baghlan	$551,500	0.9%	$335,120	39.2%
Logar	$599,305	0.9%	$442,265	26.2%
Wardok	$657,275	1.0%	$459,595	30.1%
Uruzgan	$717,325	1.1%	$717,325	0.0%
Badghis	$725,646	1.1%	$725,646	0.0%
Faryab	$739,154	1.2%	$739,154	0.0%
Badakhstan	$791,089	1.2%	$642,545	18.8%
Paktika	$827,254	1.3%	$827,254	0.0%
Paktya	$1,109,915	1.7%	$749,070	32.5%
Parwan	$1,374,416	2.2%	$1,062,257	22.7%
Kunduz	$2,533,691	4.0%	$590,821	76.7%
Bamyan	$2,553,981	4.0%	$1,935,737	24.2%
Ghazni	$3,080,182	4.8%	$658,632	78.6%
Khost	$3,677,492	5.8%	$1,525,866	58.5%
Nangarhar	$4,064,774	6.5%	$566,591	86.1%
Balkh	$5,183,185	8.2%	$1,069,850	79.4%
Herat	$5,366,111	8.4%	$1,700,320	68.3%
Kandahar	$5,410,486	8.5%	$1,134,418	79.0%
Kabul	$19,241,804	30.2%	$9,298,878	51.7%
Total	**$63,646,414**	**100.0%**	**$22,678,304**	

Notes: 1. Totals for provinces may exceed actual number of projects and funds committed as a result of double counting for activities identified as benefiting two or more provinces (Source OTI database).

Kabul, where projects focused on the central government, received 30% of OTI funding. The remaining 70% of the budget was unevenly spread amongst 31 provinces. Fifteen provinces received no funding for media projects, thereby concentrating activities on local government and community projects. However, funding was between 0.3% and 1.3% for each of these provinces, that is, predominantly at the lower end of OTI expenditure.

Table 4 highlights that the provinces receiving substantial funding comprised considerable funding for media projects. These included Nangarhar (86% of provincial funding for media projects), Balkh (79%), Kandahar (79%), Ghazni (79%) and Kunduz (77%). In these provinces, funding for local government and community initiatives was low (less than 23%). In general, OTI did not extend itself ("reach out") sufficiently to villages and community within the provinces.

Media Projects

Media was a bridge to the community. OTI invested wisely in media programs; clearly the most successful avenue for OTI transitional funding. The reasons why media programs were successful, especially through Arman FM (also operating as Tolo TV and Moby Capital Partners), included the following:

- Although there was political pressure from U.S. government stakeholders to shape programming content, OTI staff successfully balanced the need to maintain media independence with political concerns.
- They were spear-headed by the strategic foresight and ingenuity of media implementers, particularly the Mohseni brothers;
- They were monitored and assisted by OTI staff with solid technical experience and vision, who were accommodated outside the USAID high-security compound and hence easily accessible;
- The media programs were not solely imparting information, but predominantly empowering Afghan's voice and opinions;
- Donor coordination was "quite good".

The establishment of independent community radio stations was perceived by stakeholders to be "very impressive and a case study for best practice projects." Local radio stations were keen to engage the community and provide connections with their citizens in order to "let the people speak." One example is the election and human rights radio programming for rural women in Parwan (IOMKBL110) conducted by Voice of Peace over nine months from February to October 2004. Seventy-two programs in total (two programs per week) involved community participation through interviews, discussions, dramas and comedies to impart information on election registration and voting procedures. Human rights topics were introduced by women lawyers and journalists. Local observers generally felt that community radio brought election and government information to the people, engaging them in the planning and implementation of the programs in a manner relevant to their local concerns. Another project (IOMKBL109) involved the dissemination of agricultural skills to rural women in Parwan through the expertise of government authorities and "first-hand" practical experiences of the local community.

Youth Engagement

Youth engagement activities were minimal in OTI-funded grants. One exception was the "Peace in Afghanistan" High School Art Competition in Kabul (IOMKBL151). Two thousand students from four high schools (two girls' schools and two boys' schools), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Information and Culture, participated in the art

competition. The grant also covered the cost of printing 5,000 posters for distribution to schools, government departments, and public places. Its aim was to encourage student participation in the peace process by promoting creative expression of their beliefs for the future of Afghanistan. Another project was the painting of the concrete wall on the perimeter of the USAID CAFÉ compound by students and teachers of Kabul Art School alongside USAID and Embassy staff (IOMAFG172). This project was designed to provide interaction between students and American staff, many of whom had little opportunity to meet Afghans outside the work context due to the confines and restrictions of the CAFÉ Compound.

AINA, a media NGO, managed the only compound in Afghanistan with all media outlets in one place, where local journalists congregated socially and professionally to access privately established Afghan media companies. AINA (meaning "mirror") also provided journalism opportunities for Afghan women and youth. The compound's small enterprises provided journalism and media training, a design agency, photographers, internet facilities, video production facilities, and media monitoring. As OTI closes its operations in Afghanistan, some of the private companies within the compound are also very likely to close. The production of the country's only children's magazine, one of high quality, will end as further funding has not been secured. Children were not the sole readers of the magazine; it was a means for families, especially in remote regions, to gain literacy skills while connecting with their children and the local NGOs distributing the magazine.

OTI Use of Participatory Democratic Processes and their Impact on Women

Afghans have a history of discussing issues and reaching consensus through participatory, democratic councils called "shuras" or "jirgas."[41] Decisions of shura members affect an entire community and recommendations address anything from dispute resolution to capital punishment. Traditionally, Afghans have not included women on these decision-making bodies, but that has now begun to change. Following President Karzai's assumption of power in December 2001, the status of women and their political power in the public sphere has increased. Developments have included:

- Female delegates at the 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga and 2003 Constitutional Loya Jirga
- Female shuras created under the National Solidarity Program, a primarily World Bank-financed project that funds community block grants nationwide
- Presidential elections in which all votes were counted equally and a female candidate ran for president.

OTI funded projects amidst these major social changes. OTI grants in support of education, income generation, civic education, media development, and provincial women's centers promoted different levels of connectedness.

Women's Connectedness to Each Other

The rehabilitation of girls' and coeducational schools was important since it reopened public space for Afghan women. However, it did not necessarily increase women's connectedness to

[41] Shura is used most commonly in Dari and jirga is used most commonly in Pashtu.

each other. Income-generation and civic education projects, by contrast, connected women in new ways and prompted social change in some villages. However, OTI funded only 22 income generation projects for women, totaling $423,000, less than 1% of all grants. An estimated 900 Afghan women benefited from such training. The trainings combined income-generation (IG) skills with health and literacy courses. The income-generation72
portion of the training was used to attract women to courses and obtain the permission of reluctant husbands and fathers, who were interested in women's income earning potential, but not their learning potential.

Although the health and literacy training were supposed to take precedence, income-generation activities got the most attention, and in some cases it appears that the health and literacy training did not take place at all. Overall, the economic benefit of the training was marginal at best since training did not include marketing or marketing support. Where income-generation projects succeeded, however, was in providing social and psychological benefits. One of the most common comments made about income generation projects was that they provided women with a legitimate reason to leave the house and meet women they might not have met otherwise. While leaving the house and talking to other women may seem trivial, they are important freedoms for Afghan women, many of whom have limited movement, are unaware of their rights, and are almost invisible in their own communities. There is also anecdotal evidence that women involved in training and meetings are for the first time telling their husbands that "outside responsibilities" require that they be away for part of the day. Others have told their husbands to take lunch with them to the fields, since training or meetings will run through lunchtime and the women will not be at home to prepare food.

The evaluation team asked women if there was a difference between talking to women in their own home versus talking to women in another gathering place, such as in the home of a village leader or a nearby training center. Women in the Amadabad, Paktia shura (IOMGDZ048) responded that when they got together as a shura, they discussed girls' education, voting and voter registration, and literacy. They added that they had not discussed these issues in the past because they were "blind," but literacy, peace and income-generation training had opened their eyes and minds.

Civic education courses, including a project run by the Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF) in 302 districts, had a similar impact and brought women together to discuss their political and human rights (IOMAFG027). Educated women worked with non-literate women and both learned about the other as they bridged the urban-rural divide. Most importantly, educated, mostly urban, women began to understand the mentality of rural women; the physical hardships of rural life for women, and the challenges to improving the quality of life in rural areas for women. However, not all educated Afghan women are equally educated or experienced. Women-led NGOs hired educated Afghan women, though many women had little training experience and needed their own capacity built prior to training others. This was not taken into consideration adequately by organizers in the ACSF.[42]

[42] Azarbaijani-Moghaddem, Sippi, "Technical Lessons Learned from the Afghan Civil Society Forum ACSF/Swisspeace Civic Education for the Constitution Process," 2003, pgs. 54-60.

Although working with women-led NGOs was an OTI interest, OTI also did not fully consider the constraints of working with recently-established, women-led NGOs. NGOs established in the 1980s and 1990s by Afghan refugee women in Pakistan had much more experience, making them more successful in working with communities. Newer organizations could not have been expected to perform to the same standards.

Training courses built the capacity of all women involved. In projects where trainees were treated fairly, trust developed between women who initially saw themselves as very different from each other. These experiences are important for shaping Afghanistan's social and economic development, since it is the educated women who will serve as links between the Afghan government/international community and non-literate women. Facilitating these linkages could have been a broader OTI objective.

Women's Connectedness to their Local Communities

Some OTI grants connected women to their local communities by increasing women's presence in the public sphere and expanding their roles. Prior to implementation, projects involving women and girls had to be discussed with the community, whose decision makers were men. Especially in rural areas, these discussions about females meant they existed, and projects targeting females meant they were worthy of financial investment. Sometimes men were reluctant to allow outsiders to work with women in their villages, since men feared outsiders might bring "immorality."[43] It is unclear how many proposed projects were rejected by male community members, but usually initial reluctance did not become a major stumbling block. Men, who are tasked with protecting women, needed to know who wanted to work in their village and why. Once programs were explained, they were implemented with village support, facing only the usual problems of working in rural Afghanistan – insecurity, weather extremes, and a lack of capacity.

Education

In addition to providing education and employment opportunities, girls' school rehabilitation returned female students and teachers to the public sphere since they had to travel to and from school. This visibility reconnected women and girls with the wider community physically and psychologically, since the community agreed it was acceptable for women and girls to return to the public sphere and women and girls could again believe they had the right to travel outside their compounds.

Infrastructure

OTI-funded small-scale infrastructure projects, such as bridges and hand pumps, brought some benefits to women, although projects were not undertaken for those purposes. Such projects marginally connected women to the larger community, since bridges made it is easier to transport women to health care facilities if one existed, and hand pumps brought water closer to

[43] In the 1970s, Soviets and Afghan communists advocated for girls' education and liberation from the veil. Rural communities were scandalized by the short skirts and dresses worn by urban women. This tension in part fueled the long-running warfare of the 1980s and 1990s.

the home (IOMKBL183), allowing women to meet at a central location. Women were seldom, if ever, consulted on project design, requiring in some cases adjustments to be made after project completion. In Qalai Patak, Gardez (IOMGDZ003), for example, water taps were placed so close to the ground that women could not wash clothes and dishes. The taps later had to be changed.

In Aybak, Samangan (IOMMZR056), a water reservoir project created difficulties for the village women. During construction, the foremen asked the women to cook their lunch. The men brought just enough meat and vegetables for themselves and did not offer to share the food with the women or pay them for their services. The women also commented that the placement of the water reservoir was problematic, since it was built near a small stream that swells during seasonal floodwaters. Thus, when the spring torrents came and the women were alone in the village, they had to band together to move stones that would redirect the muddy floodwater away from the drinking water reservoir. However, the women were proud of their efforts and pleased that they had protected the water not only for their village, but for those from neighboring villages who also drew water. Few except the women of the village knew the role the women had played, but their efforts connected them to the wider community and earned the wife of the man charged with overseeing the reservoir a key to the reservoir's door.

Media

OTI funded numerous media outlets, including 14 community radio stations, three independent radio stations, and one TV station through the Internews network and Moby Capital partners. These media initiatives helped connect women to the local and wider community. For example, local women's radio such as Radio Rabia Balkhi in Mazar-e Sharif and Radio Zohra in Kunduz brought women's voices, with familiar dialect, into the home. These voices brought health and elections messages as well as local news, of more interest to less educated Afghan women than national and international events.[44]

Larger independent media such as Arman FM and Tolo TV also connected women to the greater community, though it was in terms of advancing the social agenda for all women. Female DJs and TV presenters placed women squarely in the social arena and opened new possibilities for women's careers, visibility, and influence in the public sphere. Although currently limited to large cities, the stations' music and entertainment programming is also popular among men.

Women's Connectedness to Local Authorities

The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Ministry of Education were the government bodies most connected to OTI-funded projects involving women. There was an inherent women's connectedness associated with these ministries, since they employed female school teachers and women. In terms of outreach to more women, however, the record is mixed.

[44] Altai Consulting, "Afghan Media: Three Years After," September 2004 to March 2005.

Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education is responsible for running government schools. With the thirst for education and the return of female teachers to the workplace, the ministry did not have to conduct outreach to attract girls to its facilities. In fact, the ministry was overwhelmed by the 3,000,000 children nationwide who flooded back to schools in 2002. The reopening of facilities highlighted the ministry's lack of teachers and funding to pay its existing employees. OTI supported the rehabilitation of some 40 primary and higher education schools, but concentrated only on physical structures, sometimes not ensuring that latrines and water supplies were also provided (IOMMZR004). OTI also did not supply desks, chairs, and supplies to schools, leaving their provision up to the over-stretched ministry.

Ministry of Women's Affairs

In contrast to the Ministry of Education's clear mandate, the MoWA had an unclear mandate and uncertain program funding. While some provincial DoWA directors organized programs in their offices in provincial capitals, others conducted outreach and became involved in OTI-funded income-generation programs. MoWA staff in Badakhshan was credited with playing a significant role in the success of a beekeeping training, while the director in Paktia was reluctant to play a role in civic education and peace building training conducted by AWEC.

Although income-generation projects were only a small part of the OTI grant portfolio, in provinces in which the DoWA director was dedicated to programming and outreach solid linkages were established. What is not clear at this time, however, is whether follow-on projects will be developed to take advantage of the synergies created. Funding constraints in the Ministry will limit activities to those with external donor support. Furthermore, community women recognize that the Afghan government is unable to fund projects, and that funds come from the international community.

One such example is the construction of the Provincial Women's Centers (PWCs). The construction stimulated increased contact between provincial DoWA staff and Kabul-based MoWA staff, but provincial women outside the Ministry have had little, if any involvement in the centers. In remote areas, it is unlikely women have even heard of the centers. Moreover, if they have, it is unlikely they see the PWC as a facility that can serve their needs, since the difficulties of reaching the centers make their services impractical for most women. Travel to provincial capitals from remote areas is difficult, and women must be accompanied by a male relative. Moreover, PWCs are limited to 14 of 34 provincial capitals. Their impact initially will likely not extend beyond a city and its immediate surroundings. It is unclear when the other twenty centers will be constructed and who will fund them.

Despite the difficulties of linking MoWA staff with women province-wide, it is even more difficult to link male officials with women. Male government officials expressed interest in learning women's opinions about projects, but they were unable to approach the women directly. They are constrained by cultural considerations that keep men and women separate and do not allow men to ask questions about another man's female relatives. The women also wanted to have their voices heard by government officials, but the link does not yet exist.

Improving Connectedness

There is an assumption by many that Afghan women do not know how to go about improving their lives, so they are often not asked. While it is true that non-literate women can have difficulty articulating the types of projects that might benefit them, when time is taken to discuss issues in simpler language, women fully comprehend the issues, and are capable of making useful suggestions.

For example, women in Paktia suggested that a girls' school be constructed in their village. They thought that one day a week, after school hours or on Fridays, the school could be used to host a women-only market. Women would be buyers and shopkeepers selling their own products. The market would provide not only income and a chance to improve numeric skills, but also an opportunity for women to gather in a culturally acceptable place to share ideas and meet other women.

OTI's implementing partners, IOM in particular, did not develop a method for incorporating input from proposed female beneficiaries into project design. Women were not asked in advance what types of programs they would find useful. Ideas were discussed among IOM, NGOs and government officials and then introduced to communities. Also, less traditional projects that would involve women, such as their involvement in construction projects, were not discussed with women *per se*, but agreed between the contractor and IOM.

In sum, women still need separate "bridges" in Afghanistan to establish their connectedness. In the final analysis, OTI did not adequately establish these linkages to take into consideration the needs of Afghan women as identified by Afghan women.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Was OTI strategic?

- Much strategic thinking and planning went into program start-up in Afghanistan. Additionally, sporadic attention to its strategic orientations continued until phase-out.

- OTI commissioned a significant up-front assessment by its principal implementing partner (IOM) of the feasibility of process-oriented, community-based projects. A brief gender assessment was also conducted.

- In spite of significant support for Afghan women at the highest levels of the U.S. administration, no coherent strategy to support Afghan females was developed by OTI. OTI programming consisted of mostly small, seemingly haphazard projects.

- While not strategically incorporated into or alongside OTI objectives, attention to gender issues nevertheless constituted a theme underlying much of OTI programming. This was particularly evident in the early days of the OTI program, when a gender assessment was carried out and a long-term gender advisor hired. During its tenure in Afghanistan, OTI funded meaningful and important projects that benefited women. Overall, some 24% of OTI grants and about 17% of funding were devoted to activities with at least one component targeting women.

- OTI focus remained fixed on the key transition points of the Bonn Agreement, bringing appropriate resources and personnel to bear on these events. OTI's major role in ensuring the success of the Emergency Loya Jirga is indisputable.

- Beyond the Bonn process, OTI programming generally stayed true to its three strategic objectives of legitimizing the government and connecting it to communities, supporting grassroots democracy, and creating an Afghan capacity to produce objective and quality public information. However, these are very broad objectives within which OTI funded over 700 sub-grants, most of which have not been independently evaluated for their successful contribution to overall program objectives.

- Within its broad strategic orientations, OTI's actions were tactical. There was no strategic phasing or sequencing of implementation activities. Although IOM purports to show a strategic progression in its work with government and communities, there is no indication that OTI was aware of these programmatic phases.

- Tactically, OTI showed a good deal of flexibility and responsiveness in the sub-grants it approved. In this sense, the program shifted rapidly and took advantage of critical openings. Nevertheless, nearly half of all sub-grants (46%) were quick-impact, community-level infrastructure projects. In spite of early rhetoric to the contrary, this program approach did not shift gears to higher levels as the program progressed over 3 ½ years.

- Shifting strategic orientations normally relies on effective program monitoring, but despite attempts to develop Performance Monitoring Plans, progress toward OTI objectives was never measured. Monitoring of sub-grants by OTI was discontinuous and remained focused on contractual compliance and quality.

- The sheer size of its mega-program in Afghanistan meant that the number of OTI field staff in-country was far too small to generate much strategizing and monitoring. The situation was clearly largely chaotic. The continued problem of insecurity further hindered collecting information, conducting analysis, and shifting program objectives or approaches accordingly.

- A large portion of the OTI program has been subject to pressures for quick, concrete, and countable results. This emphasis on financial "burn rate" and "metrics" has often worked to the detriment of strategic programming. On the other hand, the use of OTI monies as a "slush fund" for disparate U.S. Embassy and USAID Mission activities was relatively limited.

- Although intuitively logical and appealing, there is no solid evidence in Afghanistan linking OTI infrastructural grant activities to attainment of OTI political objectives. Linking a benevolent, service-oriented government to an increasingly participatory and inclusive community structure will be the work of decades, not years.

Did OTI promote government legitimacy?

- Some 78% of OTI sub-grants and 66% of funds were dedicated to the objective of increasing the Afghan government's capacity and responsiveness to its citizens. Legitimacy depended on making governmental accountable to citizens' needs and effective in response.

- OTI's first focus on entering Afghanistan was to prepare ministries to function. Activities included rehabilitating ministry buildings, providing essential office equipment – known as a "Ministry in a Box" – and establishing kindergartens, so that women could re-enter the government workforce. Some 17% of funding to increase the Afghan government's capacity and responsiveness (11% of OTI's total funding) was spent on rehabilitating central ministries. Increasing ministerial functionality was a critical, significant, relevant and effective objective for the expenditure of OTI funds.

- OTI's goal for the development of good governance was not restricted to central government ministries, so that once the central government achieved a degree of functionality, OTI moved into supporting provincial government projects.

- Through community-level projects, OTI sought to connect central and provincial governments with their constituent communities. OTI activities predominantly focused on redirecting the community to their local authorities instead of implementing partners to express their needs and submit project proposals. While this has proved successful, there has been little two-way engagement, except in some community infrastructure projects, in which local governments have sometimes assisted in project design, monitoring, and final approval.

- OTI has faced a major problem in connecting the central government to provincial governments. In support of this objective, OTI required that the central government approve provincial projects. This led to delays in launching projects, with expectable community frustration. Moreover, central governmental representatives have often been reluctant to visit the provinces. In spite of OTI efforts to the contrary, bottom-up contacts from the provinces have not been matched by central governmental involvement.

- Funding for election processes and awareness, including the selection of delegates to the two Loya Jirgas, totaled about 7% of the total OTI budget. Election activities, if sometimes poorly planned, were well implemented, and fully engaged local authorities and communities. Although election support activities were not the most common focus of OTI, they proved to be highly important in terms of impact.

- Through OTI and other donor support, the central government has raised people's expectations of development and other services, but it has not been able to fulfill them without donor funding and logistical support. In some cases, donor officials see NGO implementers as something of a barrier to governmental involvement, since government can use their existence as an excuse not to deal with regional problems.

- During training sessions for women in constitutional and election processes, implementers learned that it was possible to reach women in remote areas and for these women to understand the basic constitutional and rights issues under discussion. Moreover, the urban, educated women conducting the training learned much about rural Afghanistan and rural women, beginning a process of linking urban and rural women.

- The two ministries most involved in projects in which girls and women were beneficiaries of OTI grants were the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Women's Affairs. MoE involvement and effectiveness in school construction or rehabilitation (Ministry met with the community and the school board to discuss construction issues and provide updates and information) usually led to increased visibility and credibility for the MoE, in spite of delays, quality problems, and selection issues.

- With the Ministry of Women's Affairs, government engagement with OTI-funded projects usually revolved around income-generation training for women and the construction of Provincial Women's Centers (PWCs). Neither has reached its potential of raising governmental legitimacy in the eyes of rural women. Income-generation training has suffered from lack of community participation in design and failure to consider marketing issues in implementation. On the other hand, a relationship between Provincial Women's Centers, their MoWA staff, and the wider female population has yet to occur.

Did OTI's use of participatory democratic processes increase citizen's connections to each other and to local authorities?

- Given the size of Afghanistan, funding for community impact activities was insufficient at 39% of the total budget, of which 87% went to small infrastructure projects. Income-generation projects received only 3% of community-oriented funding.

- OTI's focus on community infrastructure was maintained for much too long. While important for the first six to 12 months, reliance on quick-impact infrastructure projects continued down to program close-out, removing resources from activities more likely to produce qualitative changes in community political and social organization, such as micro-credit and micro-enterprise, peace building and conflict resolution, civic education, and other innovative interventions.

- Income-generation projects, undertaken with women, generally failed to address marketing issues, a usual failing of such projects when not carefully thought out. Although these and other community-level projects were used to expose "captive audiences" to health, literacy, and civic education messages. The relative success or failure of these "hidden-agenda" components has not been monitored or documented.

- OTI's peace building and conflict resolution activities proved highly successful in terms of participatory processes, consensus building, confidence building, improved mediation, and changing attitudes. Peace building workshops were conducted by a local Afghan NGO, resulting in the formation of peace committees. These, in turn, led to changed attitudes and behaviors, whereby prejudices against specific groups were reduced. The committees provided the opportunity to speak freely about conflicts in the community and the development of mutual solutions.

- While activities undertaken at the community level were important in their own right, their main purpose was to promote a process of community democratic change. However, OTI's community participation model and participatory processes were not clearly articulated, identified, or documented. Activities were undertaken under the assumption that bringing communities and service providers together would result in more consensual, more open, more inclusive decision making. This generally did not occur.

- Many community-level infrastructure projects have suffered from poor quality, because OTI lacked the means to monitor effectively hundreds of such projects across Afghanistan. Poor quality structures in the face of governmental inability to repair, or eventually replace them will over time damage the very gains in community acceptance and confidence in government these projects were intended to achieve.

- From mid-2002 OTI expanded its reach beyond Kabul to the regions, although the push to the east, south, and south-east has been more tenuous because of security concerns. OTI use of Leahy Initiative funding has been very effective in "reaching out" to remote communities across 18 districts in six provinces in the south-east of Afghanistan. Designed to provide community compensatory activities, it was quickly recognized as an effective method to

assist all communities, mitigate the influence of governmental opponents, and affirm the legitimacy of the new government.

- A legacy of OTI quick-impact community-level projects has been the USAID Quick Impact Program since October 2003 that is run through the civil-military Provincial Reconstruction Teams. However, QIP continues to rely very heavily on small infrastructure projects to build governmental legitimacy and population trust. In this sense, it has failed to learn from OTI's experience.

- The rehabilitation of girls' and coeducational schools was important, since it reopened public space for Afghan females. This visibility reconnected women and girls with the wider community physically and psychologically. Because the community agreed it was acceptable for women and girls to return to the public sphere, women and girls could again believe they had the right to travel outside their compounds.

- Education projects, however, did not necessarily increase women's connectedness to each other. Income-generation and civic-education projects, by contrast, connected women in new ways and prompted social change in some villages. Income-generation projects targeting women provided social and psychological benefits to community women, giving them a legitimate reason to leave the house and meet women they might not have met otherwise. Civic education courses had a similar impact and brought women together to discuss their political and human rights.

- OTI-funded small-scale infrastructure projects, such as bridges and hand pumps, brought some benefits to women, though projects were not normally undertaken for those purposes. Some projects, such as bridges and hand pumps connected women to the larger community, but women were seldom, if ever, consulted on project design, and in some cases adjustments had to be made after project completion.

- OTI's community-level implementing partner (IOM) did not develop a method for incorporating input from proposed female beneficiaries into project design. Women were not asked in advance what types of programs they would find useful. Ideas were discussed among IOM, NGOs and government officials and then introduced to communities. Moreover, the degree and type of women's involvement in less traditional projects, such as their labor provision in construction projects, was not discussed with women, but agreed between the contractor and IOM.

V. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECCOMENTATIONS

OTI STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS AND RELEVANCE

- OTI can and should be strategic in its country programs. Being strategic means taking responsibility for a few longer-range objectives from the beginning of country operations. These objectives should be developed on the basis of initial, although rapid, assessments and should be reviewed and modified as the country situation evolves. This was clearly the early intention in the Afghanistan program. Activities focused on longer-term objectives can exist alongside short-term actions predicated on new U.S. foreign policy emphases or needs.

- The best way to keep activities focused on strategic objectives is to conduct a strategic planning session once the post-crisis situation has stabilized. The objective of this session should be to reach agreement among OTI and implementation partner managers on a Performance Monitoring Plan that can be followed over the anticipated remaining program (2-3 years). This PMP should be kept as simple and practical as possible with indicators that are realistically measurable. In the context of OTI programming, this means that indicators will probably track major outputs rather than true impacts.

- While infrastructure activities make sense in the early stage of a program intervention, this should be phased into activities of a qualitative nature that evolve as confidence is generated in the population. The ability to phase and sequence new types of interventions will depend a good deal on the size of the country, state of community infrastructure, and the ability to rapidly implement quality projects.

- OTI should set its own strategic priorities and promote them to implementing organizations, rather than letting the latter set their own course. To maintain control in a mega-program, the number of OTI field staff must be augmented substantially, particularly when the initial situation has given way to one where knowledge has accumulated and stock can be taken. Some part of that staff should be charged with monitoring program performance against objectives. The external constraints that currently limit the number of staff in mega-programs must be eased, if OTI is to reach its full potential.

- OTI can and should develop a gender strategy within OTI country programming. In Afghanistan, project implementation that could benefit women and girls lacked an overarching national strategy, resulting in a patchwork of largely haphazard projects. Attention to gender issues would have been most relevant for the participatory processes promoted in communities. It is also preferable to mainstream gender issues into broader objectives, rather than create stand-alone, gender-based activities.

- A larger share of funding for women's issues should be envisaged in future OTI country interventions. In Afghanistan this share was about 17% of total funding. In situations where women's substantial inequality is an obvious strategic policy issue for the United States, the share of funding, although mainstreamed into objectives, should be considerably greater.

OTI ROLE IN PROMOTING GOVERNMENT LEGITIMACY

- Provision of funding for infrastructure and logistics support projects to increase the functionality of central government ministries should be maintained as a key objective for future OTI projects. This proved quite successful in "standing up" the Afghan government for a minimal cost ($5.2 million of the total $46.6 million). Moving quickly to enable effective and efficient communications between regional governments and the central government should also remain a high priority to be implemented at the earliest possible time.

- Ministries in Afghanistan have lacked cooperation amongst themselves, connection to their provincial and district delegations, and coordination with community-level governance structures. The process of building these linkages should be watched over more carefully by OTI, rather than leaving it to implementation partners. When security or distance are issues, the practice of contracting local NGOs, such as Afghans for Afghans, to monitor project achievements in far-flung regions should be emulated.

- Monitoring of implementing partners and their contractors will be all the more necessary when projects move past the infrastructure stage. Qualified local NGOs will normally prove to be more successful than international organizations and OTI staff at regularly monitoring community-level projects, where governmental legitimacy, community confidence, and democratization are prime objectives. Trust by members of remote communities has to be developed gradually and each community requires an adjustment of community participation strategies.

- OTI projects often require the cooperation and coordination of several ministries and departments to avoid duplication of efforts, optimize the use of resources, provide swift approvals and support for projects, and enable stronger linkages with the community. Although Afghan communities are reaching out to their provincial authorities and these to the central ministries, the response from the central level is often weak and fragmented. In future, OTI should find improved ways of networking and relationship building with civil society to complement short-term governmental weakness, while at the same time working to strengthen governmental legitimacy and outreach.

- OTI should be careful to invest in rehabilitation of large-scale governmental infrastructure, not new construction. Construction of new facilities is generally beyond the timing and scope of an OTI program. Moreover, OTI should invest in high-quality rehabilitation work, since ministry buildings and schools are permanent government structures whose functionality will impact the legitimacy of a government for years.

- OTI should seek out and recreate successful projects of the past. These "comfort zones" from the past can be used to reach the future. OTI funded rehabilitation work in 15 ministry kindergartens that were remembered fondly from pre-war days. That the culturally acceptable kindergartens were not new concepts made such projects easy to implement. The kindergartens brought female civil servants back to work who had been banished to their homes during the Taliban administration. Kindergarten rehabilitation also created a demand

for more such facilities, signaling that women wanted to return in force to Afghanistan's public sphere.

OTI USE OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

- Community initiatives and government outreach activities cannot be undertaken in isolation. For greater effectiveness and impact, they should be undertaken together and be inextricably linked using participatory processes. Greater involvement of community members in local project design, monitoring, and final approval is required. The creation by IOM of joint government-community tendering committees is an important step in the right direction, and this model could be more actively promoted by OTI in future programs.

- OTI funds should be used to support transitional community-based programs that enhance environmental conservation and management, marketing and trade skills, and regional economic and social integration. Regional integration involves building linkages between nearby communities in order for them to conserve or share resources (such as water, but also heritage or religious sites,) and to build trade within their district. If projects are "one-off" and not designed to lead to others in the same places, some of these should be of wide political, social, and community benefit.

- OTI's focus on community infrastructure, while important initially, was not the only or the best means to promote local participatory processes. NGOs and some OTI staff feel that community infrastructure projects should have been undertaken for the first 12 months or so (to June 2003), and then funds should have been redirected to other community initiatives, such as income-generation, peace building activities, or other innovative projects.

- Income-generation projects received a mere 3% of community initiative funding and slightly over 1% of total funding. Income-generation projects aim to empower communities, especially women, in a manner distinct from other community-based programs. OTI should make far more use of these projects in its community-oriented "toolkit," but it will need to partner with well qualified (usually specialized) institutions to do so. Project content should focus as much or more on getting produce to market as on production skills. The appointment of a skilled community liaison or outreach facilitator to supervise income-generation projects for OTI is also recommended.

- OTI should fund far more peace building and conflict resolution activities in future programs, as well as make wider use of their community organization approach. A missed opportunity for OTI was peace building and conflict resolution training linked to cross-border issues to provide an innovative, non-traditional response to the permeability of borders between Afghanistan and Pakistan. These border regions remain problematic and should have been early focus points for confidence building through dialogue, community reintegration, and disarmament. It is probably too late and dangerous at present to undertake such cross-border initiatives.

- It is critical that OTI provide greater supervision to local grantee organizations, which represent a key source of innovation, confidence building, motivation, and dynamism

essential for promoting community initiatives through decentralized and diversified strategies. To improve community impact, OTI needs to be sure its grantees establish relationships of trust, transparency, methods to appraise community needs and community engagement, and sustained participation.

- OTI should attempt to work as much as possible in problematic geographic areas. In Afghanistan, OTI is proud to claim it has projects in every province, but the distribution of projects is highly inequitable, with the north and the west benefiting most. These are the areas in which it is easiest to work and the areas that will progress even without external assistance. To make the transition process lasting, OTI should concentrate its efforts in the areas that may well feel left behind by the swiftly moving political transition. In Afghanistan, OTI missed an opportunity by not capitalizing on the initial peace dividend and working in areas now increasingly alienated and insecure.

- OTI should take risks with projects that encourage interaction and behavior change. Two resoundingly successful types of projects were not obvious "winners" in the initial stages: funding major independent media (Arman FM and Tolo TV) through non-media partners in a market where advertising was virtually unknown; and establishing a women's shura in a conservative Pashtun area. Both endeavors were the ideas of Afghans with a vision for the "new Afghanistan," who had successful track records, were willing to push the social agenda, and take calculated risks. These projects paid off more handsomely than typical small infrastructure rehabilitation projects that communities or government might have been able to do on their own.

- OTI should tackle difficult gender issues simply. OTI was not in Afghanistan for the long term and could not be expected to resolve all problems of Afghan women. In rural areas, especially, non-literate Afghan women are vastly different from their educated, urban compatriots. Rural Afghan women are also invisible, seldom venturing beyond the walls of a compound. What was missed by OTI and its grantees was the simple fact that Afghan women need more visibility. If they are visible, they exist; women who exist can play a role in society, receive education and health care, and vote. OTI and IOM focused on the mechanics of projects, schools, and complicated income-generation training. What women really need are culturally acceptable places to which they can travel outside the home. This simple physical movement, banned by the Taliban, places women in the public sphere and restores their freedom of movement.

ANNEXES

Annex A: List of Projects Visited by Site

Location	Project ID	Grant Title	Grant Amount	Evaluation Mechanism
Kabul				
Kabul	RON007	Kindergarten Rehabilitation: Ministry of Agriculture &Livestock	$23,945	Site visit
Kabul	RON010	Rehabilitation of Ministry of Information and Culture Building	$96,845	Site visit
Kabul	RON011	Kindergarten: Ministry of Information and Culture, Kabul	$9,966	Site visit
National	RON029	Provision of Communication (CODAN system) for 7 provinces	$81,690	Site visit to Helmand
Kabul	RON047	Establishment of Arman FM – Private Radio Station in Kabul	$228,802	Meeting with the Mohseni Brothers
Kabul	RON048	Office Supply for Women's State Minister Office, Kabul	$4,857	Site visit; Meeting with Minister
National	RON053	Provision of Communications (CODAN system) for 21 Provinces and 4 in Kabul	$194,728	Site visit to Parwan
National	RON060	Peace Building Training for 50 Afghan Journalists in 15 Provinces	$9,171	Meeting with SDF
Kabul	RON064	Construction of Guard House for Ministry of Information & Culture	$4,435	Site visit
Kabul	RON073	Renovation of Kabul Courthouse	$81,658	Site visit
Kabul	RON074	Support for 12 Provincial Peace Building Workshops	$36,580	Meeting with SDF
Kabul	RON077	Renovation of Kabul Courthouse to Protect Property Documents	$57,077	Site visit
Kabul	RON079	Provision of Peace Building Training of Trainers	$33,082	Meeting with SDF
Kabul	RON085	Production of Marble Signs for USAID Projects	$5,191	Site visits
Kabul	RON086	Peace Training for Community Leaders	$1,956	Meeting with SDF
Kabul	RON087	Renovation of New City Park	$32,552	Site visit
Kabul	RON093	Salary for System Analyst for Property Documents	$3,350	Meeting with Randy Willard
Kabul	RON095	Boundary Wall for National Archives Building	$25,630	Site visit
Kabul	RON102	Organization of Kabul Property Documents	$26,206	Site visit to courthouse
Kabul	SAMPLER	Technical Support to UNDP Loya Jirga Logistics (Larry Sampler)	$81,175	Meeting with Larry Sampler
Kabul	UNDP002	UNDP Trust Fund – Loya Jirga Operations	$3,000,000	Meeting with Larry Sampler
National	IOMAFG004	Gender Sectoral Expert – Judy Benjamin 2	$47,113	Phone Interview
National	IOMAFG006	Production of Project Signs	$30,645	Site visits

National	IOMAFG008	Training for Afghan Women Film Makers, Kabul	$97,110	Meeting with AINA
Kabul	IOMAFG024	Gender Sectoral Expert – Judy Benjamin 3	$7,919	Phone Interview
Kabul	IOMAFG027	Public Education of the Constitutional Processes in 302 Districts	$353,850	Meeting with Afghan Civil Society Forum
Kabul	IOMAFG050	Rehabilitation of the Post Office Building in Shahrenaw, Kabul	$47,136	Site visit
Kabul	IOMAFG080	Four Film Clips Promoting Women and Development in Afghanistan	$34,570	Meeting with AINA
Kabul	IOMAFG087	Independent Commercial Television: Transmitter Equipment	$298,626	Meeting with the Mohseni Brothers
Kabul	IOMAFG091 to 095	Independent Commercial TV: Transmitter Infrastructure & Equipment	$284,738; $283,724; $276,140; $293,001; $286,531	Meeting with the Mohseni Brothers
Kabul	IOMAFG108 IOMAFG109	Independent Commercial TV: Studio Production Equipment	$286,531; $108,640	Meeting with the Mohseni Brothers
Kabul	IOMAFG125	Assessment of the Role of Media & Journalists in the Election Period	$14,882	Meeting with The Asia Foundation
Kabul	IOMAFG139	Monitoring & Evaluation of Media Investments	$75,640	Meeting with ALTAI Consulting
Balkh	IOMAFG140	AINA Photography Exhibit, "Election Through Afghan Eyes"	$12,992	Meeting with AINA & viewing of exhibit in Kabul
Kabul	IOMAFG145	Monitoring & Evaluation of Media Development Throughout Afghanistan	$197,660	Meeting with ALTAI Consulting
Kabul	IOMAFG159	Research and Analysis of Sursvey of Afghan Media Development	$96,180	Meeting with ALTAI Consulting
National	IOMAFG164	Evaluation of ATI Program	$74,650	Meeting with ALTAI Consulting
Kabul	IOMAFG172	Wall Painting Event – CAFÉ Compound Wall	$2,531	Site visit
Kabul	IOMAFG173	Toys for Kindergartens in Ministries	$3,000	Site visit of 2 Kindergartens
Kabul	IOMKBL001	Gender Sectoral Expert – Judy Benjamin 1	$51,621	Phone interview
Kabul	IOMKBL003	Rehabilitation of Media Resource Center in Kabul	$33,619	Site visit, AINA
Kabul	IOMKBL004	Ministry of Women's Affairs, Zinab Auditorium Rubble Removal, Kabul	$9,477	Site visit
Kabul	IOMKBL006	Rehabilitation of Teachers' Training College Facility, Kabul	$117,690	Site visit
Kabul	IOMKBL008	Renovation & Capacity Support, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Kabul	$40,404	Meeting with Minister Jalal
Kabul	IOMKBL030	Construction of Omara Khan School	$255,000+	Site visit
National	IOMKBL100	Website for Ministry of Women's Affairs	$2,428	Web search
Kabul	IOMKBL101	Construction of Provincial Women's Center in Parwan Province	$123,032	Site visit
National	IOMKBL103	Furnishing and Equipment for 14 Provincial Women's Centers	$630,000	Site visits to Parwan and Helmand

National	IOMKBL108	Production of Project Signs for Provincial Women's Centers	$2,000	Site visit to Parwan
Kabul	IOMKBL119	NGO Capacity Support to Monitor Insecure Regions of Afghanistan	$77,973	Meeting with Afghans for Afghans
Kabul	IOMKBL209	Repair to Bomb Damaged Street	$128,707	Site visit
Farah	IOMOTI002	Peace & Conflict Resolution Workshops for Provincial Leaders	$40,756	Meeting with SDF
Balkh	IOMOTI003	Organization of Provincial Property Documents for Balkh, Kandahar, Herat	$50,000	Site visit
Gardez				
Paktya	IOMAFG114	Generator for Gardez Television Station, Paktya	$9,121	Site visit
Paktya	IOMGDZ003	Reservoir & Pipe System for Irrigation & Drinking Water	$14,915	Site visit but couldn't find it
Paktya	IOMGDZ047	Education & Tailoring Course for Women in Gardez	$15,517	Site visit; meeting with director
Paktya	IOMGDZ048	Supporting Women's Programs & Training in Amad Abad, Paktya	$56,352	Meeting with women's Shura
Paktya	IOMGDZ049	Construction of Provincial Women's Center in Paktya Province	$96,732	Site visit
Paktya	IOMGDZ052	Koz Pearoz Khel/Saparhay Khowarh culvert & retaining wall	$22,000	Site visit but couldn't find it
Paktika	IOMGDZ069	Food Preservation & Marketing Training for Women, Paktya & Paktika	$19,258	Site visit; meeting with participants
Kandahar				
Helmand	IOMAFG071	Women's Vocational Agriculture Education, Lashkar Gah	$55,801	Site visit
Kandahar	IOMAFG111	University Media Centers and Training, Kandahar & 3 Provinces	$277,972	Site visit
Kandahar	IOMKHD001	Restoration of a Women's Wing of the Kandahar Hospital	$20,220	Site visit
Helmand	IOMKHD003	Construction of Training Facility at Lashkar Gah Hospital, Helmand	$53,216	Site visit
Helmand	IOMKHD005	Rehabilitation of Lashkar Gah pipe system, Helmand Province	$47,800	Site visit
Helmand	IOMKHD006	Agriculture Training and Radio Programs for Women in Helmand	$78,289	Site visit
Helmand	IOMKHD007	Establishment of Vocational Agricultural Center for Women	$85,097	Site visit
Kandahar	IOMKHD008	Repair of the Arghandab Bridge	$5,055	Site visit
Kandahar	IOMKDH012	Construction of a Ground Reservoir	$55,208	Site visit
Kandahar	IOMKHD042	Power Poles and Electrical Supplies for Loya Wala	$26,401	Site visit
Kandahar	IOMKHD044	Transformers & Electrical Equipment for Lashkar Gah water system	$27,714	Site visit
Kandahar	IOMKHD053	Rehabilitation of 50 culverts in Loya Wala	$53,068	Site visit
Kandahar	IOMKHD054	Construction of 22 culverts for secondary roads, Panjwai	$18,183	Site visit
Kandahar	IOMKHD055	Drainage canal rehabilitation for	$10,553	Site visit

		Panjwai District		
Kandahar	IOMKHD057	Rehabilitation of irrigation canal in Panjwai District	$37,205	Site visit
Kandahar	IOMKHD060	Construction of a Post Office in Panjwai District	$14,026	Site visit
Helmand	IOMKHD063	Construction of Helmand Provincial Women's Center	$92,934	Site visit
Kandahar	IOMKHD066	Rehabilitation of 8km drainage canal in Loya Wala	$87,000	Site visit
Mazar-e Sharif				
Mazar-e Sharif	IOMMZR002	Construction of New Classrooms in Hashim Barat Girls' School	$34,264	Site visit
Samangan	IOMMZR004	Rehabilitation of Dowlat-abad Primary (secondary) school	$27,464	Site visit
Mazar-i-Sharif	IOMMZR010	Rehabilitation of Sultan Razia Girls' School	$179,531	Site visit
Samangan	IOMMZR033	Construction of Lab-e-Jari Taghan intake in Shiberghan of Jawzjan	$86,093	Site visit
Samangan	IOMMZR039	Construction of dam & retaining walls in Aybak, Samangan	$31,363	Site visit
Samangan	IOMMZR044	Rehabilitation of Marjan Irrigation System in Aybak District, Samangan	$9,885	Site visit
Samangan	IOMMZR056	Construction of Three Water Reservoir Pools, Aybak	$70,203	Site visit
Mazar-e Sharif	IOMMZR066	Internet Club at Balkh University	$21,544	Site visit
Mazar-e Sharif	IOMMZR071	Community Based Sanitation and Health Education in Mazar-I Sharif	$21,144	Site visit
Mazar-e Sharif	IOMMZR076	Establishment of a Printing Press in Balkh University, Balkh Province	$19,074	Site visit; but closed during visit
Parwan				
Parwan	RON053	Provision of Communications (CODAN system) to 21 Provinces and 4 in Kabul	$194,728	Site visit
Parwan	IOMAFG051	Rehabilitation of the Post Office in Parwan Center	$20,877	Site Visit
Parwan	IOMKBL092	Reconstruction of Jabalseraj City Bridge	$40,054	Site vis it
Parwan	IOMKBL101	Construction of Provincial Women's Center in Parwan Province	$123,032	Site visit
Parwan	IOMKBL109	Agricultural Skills Radio Program for Rural Women in Parwan Province	$8,179	Site visit
Parwan	IOMKBL110	Elections and Human Rights Radio Programming for Women, Parwan	$10,120	Site visit
Parwan	IOMKBL183	Construction of Bore Wells and Hand Pumps, Baglam, Parwan Province	$34,387	Site visit

Annex B: List of Persons Interviewed

Kabul

Fareeba, Kindergarten Principal, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
Ernst Fassbinder, Country Director, AINA
Dr. Massouda Jalal, Minister, Ministry of Women's Affairs
Jahid Mohseni, Director/COO, Moby Capital Partners
Saad Mohseni, Director, Arman FM
Rahela Nazirabi, Kindergarten Director, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
Saila Niazi, Kindergarten Director, Ministry of Information and Culture
Azizurrahman Rafiee, Managing Director, Afghan Civil Society Forum
Jamie Terzi, Program Manager, Afghan Women's Educational Center
Neelab Zarif, Director, Afghans for Afghans

Kandahar

Fauzia Olomi, Director, Department of Women's Affairs/Provincial Women's Center, Helmand
Trainees in female health education course at Panjwai district clinic, Kandahar
District governor, Panjwai District, Kandahar Province
Mayor, Panjwai municipality, Kandahar Province
Deputy Mayor, Panjwai municipality, Kandahar Province
Head and members of Panjwai district men's shura
Representative of Panjwai district Kuchi (nomadic) community

Mazar-e Sharif and Samangan Province

Abdul Hadi, Hydro-technical Department (Samangan), Irrigation Department, Government of Afghanistan
Zewar Kamal, Assistant to Director, Sultan Razia School, Mazar-e Sharif
Women responsible for maintaining water reservoir in Aybak district, Samangan
Zahira, Headmistress, Sultan Razia School, Mazar-e Sharif
Habibullah Habib, Chancellor, Balkh University, Mazar-e Sharif
Mohammed Azim Hashemi, Deputy Chancellor, Balkh University, Mazar-e Sharif
Qandi Horani, Director, Community Fora Development Organization, Mazar-e Sharif
Nafisa Gheyasi, Directress, Hashem Barat Girls High School, Mazar-e Sharif
Sayed Mayu Uddin Shiwa, Deputy Director, Department of Economics, Northern region, Government of Afghanistan

Paktia Province

Mahera Ahmedzai, Leader of Women's Shura, Amadabad
Dien M. Darwash, Chief of Information and Culture, Gardez
Female shura members, Amadabad
Halima Khazan, Director, Department of Women's Affairs, Gardez

Miriam, Member of Women's Shura, Amadabad (daughter of Mahera Ahmedzai)
Abdul Ahmad Rodwal, Head, TV and Radio Gardez
Trainees in preserves making course (Gardez)

Parwan Province

A. Hay Darwesh, Director, Parwan Center Post Office (Charikar)
Abdel Ahad Ranjbar, Journalist, Radio Peace (Jebel Seraj)
Ms. Shajan, Directress, Parwan Women's Resource Center

Afghanistan Reconstruction Group (ARG)

Louis Hughes, Chief of Staff
Patt Maney, Senior Political Advisor
Jeff Raleigh, Senior Public Relations Advisor

ALTAI

Eric Davin, Program Officer, researcher in IOM/ATI evaluation
Malachi O'Rourke, Program Officer, researcher in IOM/ATI evaluation
Mitash Thakkar, Program Officer, researcher in IOM/ATI evaluation

OTI/Washington and Afghanistan

Deborah Alexander, former OTI Field Program Advisor
Michele Amatangelo, Program Officer, OTI/Washington
Jason Aplon, Senior Advisor, OTI/Washington
Michelle Barrett, Deputy Country Representative, OTI/Afghanistan
Lee Briggs, M&E Officer, OTI/Sri Lanka
Elizabeth Callender, OTI Program Manager, OTI/Washington
Jessica Davey, Country Represenatative, OTI Afghanistan
Rob Jenkins, Deputy Director, OTI/Washington
Adam Kaplan, OTI Media Advisor, in IOM/Afghanistan
Donne Kerner, Program Officer, OTI/Washington (formerly of IOM/Afghanistan)
John Langlois, Senior Media Advisor, OTI/Washington
Karma Lively, Operations Manager, OTI/Washington (formerly of OTI/Afghanistan)
Miguel Reabold, former Acting OTI Country Representative, OTI/Afghanistan
John Rigby, Senior Advisor, OTI/Washington
Justin Sherman, ANE Team Leader, OTI/Washington
Mary Stewart, Head of M&E, OTI/Washington
Tom Stukel, Senior Advisor, OTI/Washington (by telephone)
David Taylor, Director, OTI Washington
Rachel Wax, Program Officer, OTI/Washington

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Abdel Ahad, Program Engineer, Kandahar Field Office
Marzai Akbari, Gender Assistant, Kabul Field Office
Muhammed Omar Andar, Senior Program Assistant, Kabul Field Office
Philippe Branchat, former IOM field office director, Bamyan Field Office
Beth Dunlop, Assistant ATI Program Manager, IOM/Afghanistan
Ghotai Ghazialam, ATI Program Manager, IOM/Afghanistan
Elyas Gheyasi, Senior Program Officer, Mazar-e Sharif Field Office
Paul Greening, ATI Program Manager, Kabul Field Office
A. Shuja Helmandi, Program Assistant, Kandahar Field Office
Kristine Jacobsen, Assistant ATI Program Manager, IOM/Afghanistan
Mehboob Jalal, Program Officer, Gardez Field Office
Nasim Karim, IOM Officer-in Charge, Kandahar Field Office
Brian Kelly, Senior Program Manager, IOM/Afghanistan
Stephen Lennon, Former Program Officer, IOM/Afghanistan
Martin Ocaga, Field Office Director, Mazar-e Sharif Field Office
Larry Sampler, former Operations Director for ELJ, grantee to IOM/Afghanistan
Engineer Shakeer, IOM Program Officer, Mazar-e Sharif Field Office
Hortensia Vidauri, Head of Gardez Field Office

Internews

Ivan Sigal, former Regional Director for Central Asia, now Asia Director (by telephone)

Ronco Consulting Corporation

Randy Willard, former Chief of Party for Ronco Consulting in Afghanistan

Sanayee Development Foundation

Hamid Jalil, Director
Irene Chen, Program Officer
Joerg Stahllhut, Program Officer

The Asia Foundation

Barbara Smith, former OTI officer, program officer in Asia Foundation/Afghanistan

U.S. Agency for International Development

Barry Primm, Deputy Mission Director, USAID/Afghanistan
Craig Buck, former USAID/Afghanistan Mission director
Vijitha Eyango, Senior Education/Gender Advisor, SPOTS Office, ANE Bureau
Patrick Fine, Mission Director, USAID/Afghanistan
Alonso Fulgham, incoming USAID/Afghanistan Mission director

David Hoffman, former director of D&G Office, USAID/Afghanistan
Renu Jain, Basic Education Advisor, USAID/Afghanistan
Bob Jiminez, former Program Officer, USAID/Afghanistan
Elizabeth Kvitashvili, Director, CMM Office, DCHA Bureau
Nitin Madhav, Program Development Officer, Afghanistan Program, ANE Bureau
Abdul Saboor Miakhel, for Program Officer, OTI/Afghanistan
Shaperai Naziri, former Program Assistant/Gender Officer, OTI/Afghanistan
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John Patten, USAID Representative to Kandahar PRT, USAID/Afghanistan
Jeanne Pryor, Officer-in Charge, Afghanistan Program, ANE Bureau
Idrees Rahmani, former Senior Program Officer, OTI/Afghanistan
Barbara Rodey, Senior Advisor for Gender, USAID/Afghanistan
Bob Sammon, USAID Representative to Gardez PRT, USAID/Afghanistan
John Schweiger, Eastern Regional Development Advisor to PRTs, USAID/Afghanistan
Rick Scott, Program/Project Development Officer, USAID/Afghanistan
Bob Wilson, former Deputy Director of USAID/Afghanistan

U.S. Department of State

Eric Fisher, Political/Economics Officer, US Embassy in Afghanistan
Charlotte Ponticelli, Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issue
Christa Skerry, Former OTI/Afghanistan Country Representative, now in State/CRS

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Annex D: Final Evaluation Scope of Work

I. OTI Background

The USAID Administrator created OTI in the Bureau for Humanitarian Response (now called the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, DCHA) to assist priority countries to make successful transitions from crisis to recovery and stability. The volatile political and economic nature of transitioning countries requires fast, emergency-type political responses that show immediate, visible and positive effects.

Countries experiencing complex crises resulting from internal conflict and civil war have special needs that are often not addressed by traditional emergency assistance programs. OTI enables USAID to capitalize on 'windows of opportunity' where quickly deployed aid can make a critical difference to a country's transition to peaceful, democratic government. Interventions are tied to pivotal events, such as cease-fires, peace accords, or the advent of progressive leadership, often through key elections. OTI responds swiftly to these events with near-term, high-impact actions that support a country's transitional needs.

While operating in a country, OTI works to bring new groups into the transition process, tests new activities for advancing democratic governance, and provides fast and flexible support for immediate transition needs. OTI's program options for transition responses include: 1) expanding democratic political processes, 2) enhancing citizen security, 3) promoting reconciliation, 4) supporting peace negotiations, and 5) capitalizing on cross-cutting themes, including community-based approaches and media activities. As appropriate and necessary, relationships and practices that prove productive may be handed off to the USAID mission or other donors for further development when OTI phases out its assistance.

II. Afghanistan – Country Background

Since the ouster of the Taliban regime by Coalition Forces in November 2001, Afghanistan has been following the provisions of the Bonn Agreement negotiated under UN auspices by major opposition group and Diaspora leaders. Under the Agreement, a 30-member Afghan Interim Authority (AIA) headed by Hamid Karzai was inaugurated on December 22, 2001. In June 2002, the AIA convened a nationwide *Loya Jirga* (Grand Assembly) where some 1,600 delegates from around the country established the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (TISA) and elected Karzai president.

The Bonn Agreement also charged the TISA to convene another *Loya Jirga* to adopt a constitution, which was done on January 4, 2004, paving the way for nationwide presidential and parliamentary elections Afghanistan held its first national democratic Presidential elections on October 9, 2004. Hamid Karzai was announced as the official winner on November 3, 2004. Parliamentary and local elections are planned for Spring 2005.

At the same time this highly complicated and difficult political transition has unfolded, the new government - with substantial support from the international community - has been confronting

the legacy of more than two decades of almost uninterrupted war and conflict. While some notable accomplishments have been achieved in these efforts - government organs are up and running, thousands of buildings, bridges, irrigation canals, and water facilities have been built or refurbished, and hundreds of thousands of girls are going to school for the first time - the challenges facing the TISA are daunting. The country's physical, educational, and social infrastructures have been largely destroyed or marginalized. Further exacerbating the situation is a lack of security, characterized by increasing activity on the part of remaining terrorists and Taliban elements, occasionally violent episodes of political jockeying among regional warlords, a burgeoning poppy and illicit opium trade, and on-going drought.

III. OTI Afghanistan

OTI's overall goal is to support the process of recovery, rehabilitation and political development in post-conflict Afghanistan. OTI's work in Afghanistan supports USAID's strategic priorities, which include infrastructure, food security, economic development, democracy and governance, and education and health. Working with central and provincial governments, national and international NGOs, informal community groups, and media outlets, OTI identifies and supports critical initiatives that facilitate implementation of the Bonn Agreement, which was designed to move the country further along the continuum from war to peace. OTI's rapid support for activities in Afghanistan's transition period was designed to establish credibility and space for longer-term development assistance.

Responding to rapidly unfolding events in October 2001, OTI supported the development of relevant and timely information on humanitarian assistance, particularly internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups. Activities included production of a daily humanitarian information bulletin for radio broadcast, distribution of 30,000 radios, small grants to build communication and education among civil society groups, and expansion of the Voice of America's broadcast capacity in the region. In support of the June 2002 Emergency *Loya Jirga* (grand assembly held to authorize an interim administration for Afghanistan) OTI provided: technical and operational support for the UN Operations Center; a short-wave radio transmitter and extended transmissions during the assembly; assistance to the *Loya Jirga* Commission; radio and print journalist training prior to the Loya Jirga; and a public information officer for the President.

Post *Loya Jirga*, OTI reviewed its strategic directions in order to build on the momentum created by the event, along with the average Afghan's hope for peace. One goal was to assist the interim government, along with the Afghan citizenry, to play a constructive role in developing and adopting a new democratic constitution at the constitutional Loya Jirga; successfully held in December 2003 according to the schedule outlined in the Bonn Agreement.

OTI efforts are focused on communities that are at risk, including communities that are geographically or ethnically isolated, communities with poor links to national, provincial, and local authorities or international development support, and communities with large returnee populations and demobilized soldiers. OTI has been building national, provincial and local governance capacities by planning and implementing projects which are guided by community priorities, creating and/or strengthening linkages between the national, provincial, and district

government, improving the communication infrastructure, and implementing a wide-ranging media strategy.

USAID/OTI's program in Afghanistan is scheduled to end in June 2005. To date, OTI has obligated $55 million for the program. OTI's fiscal year 2002 budget was $27 million, the 2003 budget was $19.5 million, the 2004 budget was $25 million, and the 2005 budget is about $1.2 million. Projects are funded in all 34 provinces of the country. To date, over 675 grants and sub grants have been cleared for implementation.

OTI's funds for Afghanistan come from various sources, including Transition Initiative Funds (TI), International Disaster Assistance Funds (IDA), Development Assistance Funds (DA), and State Department Economic Support Funds (ESF). OTI's current implementing partners are the International Organization for Migration-Afghanistan Transition Initiative (IOM-ATI) and Internews. IOM-ATI offices are currently located in Kabul, Bamyan, Gardez, Kandahar, Kunduz, and Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat. Previous USAID/OTI partners included the Voice of America (VOA), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Ronco.

Program Goals and Objectives

GOAL: To increase citizen awareness and confidence in the process of recovery, rehabilitation and democratic political development in post-conflict Afghanistan.

OBJECTIVES: OTI's program in Afghanistan has three objectives:

1. Increase the Afghan government's responsiveness to citizens' needs;
2. Increase citizen awareness of and participation in democratic processes; and,
3. Increase the capacity of the Afghan media.

Program Activities

Projects are designed to: Re-establish relationships and routines that give communities cohesiveness; strengthen economic recovery by improving essential commercial and public infrastructure; contribute to sustainable stability and recovery by helping the Afghan government to function outside Kabul and respond to community priorities; Improve communications infrastructure; strengthen independent media; create and/or strengthen linkages among the national, provincial, and district governments. Local NGOs, community groups, and other USAID implementing partners are also engaged to facilitate linkages. Many projects also provide short term employment opportunities for men and women.

Activities to date have included providing essential goods and services that individuals and the market cannot provide on their own; improving essential commercial and public infrastructure such as reconstructing schools, public buildings, roads and bridges; repairing water systems; building women's centers and funding women's education and income generating programs, strengthening independent media to provide access to fair and balanced information, and providing information about the evolving political situation at a local and national level.

IV. Objectives of the Evaluation

OTI's program has had altered several phases and objectives have been altered to respond to the changing political and physical environment. Evaluators will need to consider these factors while conducting the evaluation. There are three preliminary questions to be answered by the final evaluation.

1. Explore if and how OTI contributed to Afghanistan's transition, presumably with the timelines and milestones established during the Bonn Process the ELJ, CLJ and the Presidential elections.
2. To what extent did OTI meet its stated goal and objectives?
3. Did OTI fill an important gap within the USAID mission? Did OTI complement the efforts of other USAID offices and international organizations working to promote peace and the democratic transition in Afghanistan? Within the context of examining these broader questions, OTI's success towards achieving its specific goal and associated objectives, as stated above, will need to be evaluated.

The exact questions to be explored during the evaluation will be defined more clearly through discussions and consultation with OTI Washington and field key staff and other stakeholders during work plan development. Illustrative questions include:

- Did OTI's projects (such as the support to ministries and other fledgling government offices) pave the way for larger development projects to begin work?
- Was OTI successful in creating and/or strengthening dynamic linkages among the national, provincial, and district governments?
- Do Afghans view their local government as being more responsive to their needs?
- Has OTI's focus on community participation contributed to opening dialogue on wider collaboration efforts between the local community and the local government, or between local and regional government?
- Has the community participation model assisted in bridging gaps between different communities (in areas where mixed communities reside)?
- Did OTI's small grants contribute to humanitarian assistance efforts, short-term or "buying time" livelihoods, or sustainable livelihoods?
- Did the provision of immediate infrastructure help communities to feel as though positive change were taking place?
- How did OTI specifically contribute to larger U.S. foreign policy objectives?
- How did OTI engage at an interagency level?
- Was OTI successful in leveraging relationships and other USG assets to accomplish its objectives?

V. Methodology

The evaluation team will be responsible for developing an evaluation strategy and methodologies that include a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analyses approaches. Specific methods, and the appropriate instruments, will be developed in concert with OTI Washington.

VI. Composition and Qualifications of the Evaluation Team*

1. One senior level evaluator with extensive experience designing and conducting evaluations, and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data. The senior level evaluator will serve as the team leader and be responsible for the draft and final evaluation reports and for de-briefs in Afghanistan and Washington, DC. Qualifications must include:
   - Academic preparation and at least ten years experience in social science evaluations particularly with programs involving community participation, media and civil society organizations, in countries undergoing transitions;
   - Academic preparation and experience in evaluation methods (survey design, sampling techniques and statistical computer applications);
   - Academic training and experience with rapid appraisal techniques (survey development, direct observation, focus group interviews, community interviews and key informant interviews);
   - Excellent analysis and writing skills;
   - Knowledge of Afghanistan's unique political, social, economic, and cultural environment.

2. One mid-level evaluator with experience conducting evaluations and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods. Qualifications must include:
   - Academic preparation and at least five years experience in social science/international setting evaluations particularly with programs involving community participation, media and civil society organizations, in countries undergoing transitions;
   - Academic preparation and experience in evaluation methods such as survey design, sampling techniques and statistical computer applications;
   - Academic training and experience with rapid appraisal techniques including survey development, direct observation, focus group interviews, community interviews and key informant interviews;
   - Excellent analysis and writing skills;
   - Knowledge of Afghanistan's unique political, social, economic, and cultural environment.

*****One of the evaluators must be a female.

3. One logistician with five years experience facilitating travel/events in foreign countries, especially in difficult post-conflict environments. This person must be highly organized and able to work in collaboration with others to locate the operational support needed for this evaluation. The logistician will be responsible for making the arrangements for translators, transportation, housing, and other logistics. The logistician will also be responsible for making arrangements for the team's own work space, computers, and printers, as well as taking the necessary security precautions while in Afghanistan.

VII. Evaluation Components and Deliverables

1. Three weeks, (April 25 – May 13, 2005) in Washington, DC for one senior and one mid-level evaluator. Tasks include:
   - Conduct literature review and desk study including OTI/Afghanistan grants data base;
   - Interview key Washington, DC staff and stakeholders;
   - Identify draft questions to address;
   - Draft work plan in collaboration with OTI/Afghanistan and Washington staff;
   - Develop methodology and instruments;
   - Finalize work plan.

2. Two weeks, (May 8 – 22, 2005) in Afghanistan for one logistician. Tasks include:
   - Arrange for evaluators' housing, cars and drivers, translators, etc.;
   - Make interview appointments and arrange transportation;
   - Provide any other logistical support as needed.

3. Three weeks, (May 15 – June 5) in Afghanistan for one senior and one mid-level evaluator to conduct final evaluation. Tasks include:
   - Collect evaluation data from Kabul and fields offices as well as from other stakeholders;
   - Conduct initial analysis and develop initial findings;
   - Confer with field staff and gender evaluation team at mid-evaluation;
   - De-brief with USAID/Afghanistan staff and present a five-page summary report of key findings.

3. Three weeks, (June 6 – June 27, 2005) in US and Washington for one senior and one mid-level evaluator. Tasks include:
   - Produce complete draft report;
   - Debrief to OTI Washington and collect comments from Washington and the field;
   - Produce final Report.

A USAID-wide presentation on the evaluation may be scheduled upon receipt of the final report.

Final Report
The outline for the final report shall include but not be limited to the following:

- Executive summary;
- Table of contents;
- Introduction and background;
- Summary description of evaluation objectives;
- Description of methodology and data sources, and limitations of the study;
- Analysis and statement of findings;
- Recommendations for future OTI programs of this kind.

Bound copies of the final evaluation report and supporting documents will be provided to OTI, along with an electronic version of the report and an electronic copy of all data files used to conduct analyses.